

# Proud to be in UNISON

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UNISON women's committee  
Annual report 2015/2016

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# National Women's Committee Annual Report 2015/16

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## Introduction

Welcome to national women's conference.

I hope you are looking forward to our annual women's conference and that you find it interesting, informative and inspiring. It is always good to meet old friends, to welcome new activists and to debate the issues which really matter to women in UNISON.

As the newly elected chair of the women's committee, I have to say that this year has been exceptionally challenging. The general election results were, of course, a huge disappointment to those of us who worked so hard to encourage women to vote – and to vote for a government which would protect our public services.

Unfortunately we have a government which now feels it has a mandate to continue to pursue an agenda of attacking the public sector, privatising and cutting wherever they believe it is possible, and attacking the lowest paid and most vulnerable in our society.

Not only that, they are directly attacking our trade union movement, with the draconian measures proposed in the Trade Union Bill. I have been immensely proud of the work our union has done to challenge the Bill, although at the time of writing I know we still have a great deal to do. I'm also aware that many, many of my sisters in UNISON have been lobbying their MPs, campaigning and raising awareness of what this Bill could mean to ordinary working people, with the support of UNISON's staff and NEC. I hope that all our efforts will result in real change, but I know that UNISON women will rise to the challenge, whatever the outcome.

One of UNISON's most dedicated activists was June Poole, a member of the national women's committee for many years, who died suddenly in August. June was also a campaigner for disability rights, an active member of Labour Link and a keen supporter of UNISON There for You. She will be greatly missed by the committee.

As you read this annual report I hope you will find much to inspire you during the next year, particularly in the regional reports which tell you what is happening around the UK. Sharing good practice and innovative ideas in this way is key to our success.

Lastly, we mustn't forget our sisters in other parts of the world, many of whom face challenges even greater than ours. We have worked with our international team to forge stronger links in places like Columbia, Kurdistan and Palestine, to name but a few, to show our sisters solidarity and that they are in our hearts and thoughts.

As always, I look forward to the debate at conference, to hearing women share their stories, and to working alongside you in our union to create a better society for all women.

Yours in sisterhood

Viv Thomson  
Chair, national women's committee

# **NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE**

## **ACTION ON CONFERENCE DECISIONS 2015**

The work of the national women's committee is underpinned by UNISON's objectives and priorities:

### **UNISON's Objectives**

- Enhance our capability to meet the recruiting, organisational and representational challenges posed by austerity measures including cuts, workforce reductions, reorganisations, attacks on facility time and privatisation. Ensuring the union is relevant to all members who provide public services – including those who work in the private sector - regardless of the economic sector in which they work.
- Protect and secure fair pay and terms and conditions, high quality employment, and pensions for UNISON members, promoting equality and challenging discrimination, supporting migrant workers, and promoting UNISON's alternative.
- Develop our public service campaigns in support of quality public services, in defence of the NHS, and all public services, building our political influence, forging alliances with unions, appropriate campaigning and community groups to challenge the austerity programme, including challenging the attacks on the welfare state. To campaign for the election of governments in Westminster, and the devolved nations, which value public services and working people, rejecting the arguments of UKIP and other far-right parties.
- Ensure that the union's structures including organisational, lay member, ICT infrastructure and internal management systems are efficient and effective to meet the changing needs of all sections of the union and its members.

Additionally, the workplan is, of course, driven by the decisions taken at national women's conference. However, the committee does not work in isolation, but with the regional women's groups and networks, other departments and committees in the union, and in partnership with organisations who share our aims.

This report summarises that work, and hopefully provides some inspiration for your campaigning, recruiting and organising work in 2016 and beyond.

There are many sources of information, including the UNISON website. The women's pages can be found here: [www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women) In addition the women's Facebook page [www.facebook.com/unisonwomen](http://www.facebook.com/unisonwomen) and Twitter account @womeninUNISON are used to share information about the campaigns we support, the groups we are working with and activities we are participating in. Please 'like' our page, follow us on twitter and join in with our social media campaigning.

We would also encourage you to become involved in the UNISON organising space. The organising space is a secure, safe online resource developed to support our activist and organising communities. It aims to support building relationships, sharing knowledge, learning and experiences. You can join here: <https://organisingspace.unison.org.uk>

Further, information is circulated to and through regional women's networks; also to activists through the equality e-bulletin and e-focus. Articles on many of the issues raised have also appeared in the UNISON journals, on the UNISON main website and social media. Where motions called for lobbying they were referred to Labour Link, and to the Connect service used by UNISON where appropriate. Regional women's networks were also asked to engage in lobbying on specific issues and around events, as MPs respond to individual constituents as well as pressure groups.

UNISON is affiliated to a wide range of groups and where possible we have worked with them as well as local, regional and national community groups.

Finally, the women's campaign guide is available as a download. This guide includes information on how to organise a campaign, the priority campaigns identified as a result of motions to national women's conference, suggestions for action and partner organisations. This is updated annually following women's conference.

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/12/Campaign-Handbook-2015-16.pdf>



## **UNISON women's campaigning handbook**

### **Your essential guide to :**

- How to organise a campaign
- Women and the cuts
- Workplace issues
- Pensions
- Welfare reform
- Women in public life
- Parents and carers
- ERAW
- Women's health
- International campaigns

## **National women's committee**

In 2015, the national women's committee agreed to form two sub-committees to concentrate on specific areas of work:

### **Sub-Committee 1**

- Encouraging women's participation in the union
- Women in the workplace
- Women and Politics / the economy

### **Sub-committee 2**

- Women in society
- Women's health
- Ending violence against women
- International

## Joint working

The committee also recognised that a many of the motions to national women's conference referred to joint working with other SOGs. Uniquely, the women's committee has representatives from all the other SOGs and the national young members' forum, but it was agreed there was a need to improve the links between the groups where there were issues of common concern, or where work overlapped.

Measures were agreed - including joint training, better clarity on roles, review of training offered, an annual joint seminar - as well as an annual equality survey, to address the issues which arise from the SOG conferences and NYMF.

## Motions not reached

A number of motions were not reached at conference in 2015. The programme for 2016 conference has been carefully considered to maximise debate time, and it is hoped that this situation will not occur again. However, where possible, and where the unheard motions were within existing UNISON women's conference policy, the committee has taken on board the spirit of the motion in their workplan.

## SUB-COMMITTEE 1

### 1.1 Encouraging women's participation in the union

Motions 1 to 4 were referred to the service group liaison committee (SGLC), and to individual service group liaison committees where they exist, with a request that service groups take on board these issues in communications with branches, and actively work to improve the representation of low paid and young women in UNISON's structures.

#### **Motion 1 : Modernising our union**

Recognised the need to recruit more young women into membership. Called on the NWC and regions to work with student bodies; improve access to branches including via social media; work with the NYMF.

#### **Motion 2 : Encouraging more young women to be active in UNISON**

Recognised that there are barriers to young women's involvement. Called on the NWC and regions to develop mentoring schemes; improve communication with young members; work with outside organisations and NYMF.

AIM	UPDATE
To increase the number of young women recruited and involved in the union.	<p>Motion 1 was selected as one of the women's conference motions to national delegate conference. It then formed part of composite A, which was carried, and the work therefore became the responsibility of the NEC.</p> <p>Regional women's committees and networks were asked to take action on relevant points within their own annual workplan. Each region has reported on their activities in section 3 of this report.</p>

## UNISON women and IT

1500 women activists responded to a survey on their use of technology. Among some of the interesting findings were that:

- just over 90% of those responding used Facebook, only 40% used Twitter – the two most common sites;
- 72% were using the UNISON website;
- whilst 90% used a computer, 70% also had a smartphone and 60% an ipad/tablet;
- 80% used IT every day in their personal life;
- the vast majority (81%) did not perceive any barriers to their use of IT;
- around 40% would like on-line training, 30% traditional training

The findings will be used to inform training programmes for women, and to target future campaign materials.

### **Motion 4 : Increasing participation of low paid and part time women**

Identified the need to communicate the benefits of women joining UNISON. Called on the NWC to develop a communications strategy, including via the national and regional websites; research barriers to low paid women's participation; campaign for advance payment of expenses by branches.

AIM	UPDATE
To raise awareness of the benefits of union membership for low paid women, remove barriers to their participation.	Women's Lives training is to be updated and re-launched in Spring 2016, with targeted mailshots to encourage participation. Other training developed, including skills based training, will be showcased at national women's conference 2016.

### **Motion 26 : Increasing Black women's participation in women's self organisation**

Expressed concern that Black women may face additional barriers to progress in women's self organisation. Called on the NWC to survey Black women on their progression from branch to regional SOGs, and barriers to progression; work with branches to encourage greater representation; share good practice.

### **Motion 27 : Encouraging diversity in women's committees**

Asked the NWC to work to improve diversity across branches/regions and at national level. Called on the NWC to survey branches re Black women's involvement; work with branches to encourage their inclusion; monitor and publish progress.



AIM	UPDATE
To improve representation of Black women in UNISON's structures.	The NBMC workplan has a comprehensive programme of activity to encourage participation by Black activists already underway. Barriers to participation and progression will be included in the first joint equality survey in early 2016.

## Mary Seacole statue appeal

UNISON has long supported the appeal to raise funds for a permanent memorial to Mary Seacole, a Jamaican born woman of Scottish and Creole descent who set up a "British Hotel" behind the lines during the Crimean Wars to nurse British soldiers. Following a motion to women's conference, fund raising events were organised by branches and regions and at national events to support the appeal.

In November 2015 it was announced that banking fines would be used to meet the remaining costs, and it is anticipated that the statue will be erected in the Spring.

Well done to all those who contributed and fund-raised!



### Motion 28 : Saying what we mean

Brought attention to the way in which language can exclude groups of women and/or make them feel unwelcome in women's self organisation. Called on the NWC to work with the LGBT committee in developing guidance on inclusive language; review NWC publications to ensure that language used is inclusive.

AIM	UPDATE
To ensure that inclusive language is used in UNISON documents and environments.	<p>The September NWC meeting received a briefing on non-binary identification and inclusive language, which it is hoped will support RWCs in reviewing their own practice and documentation to ensure inclusivity.</p> <p>Further joint SOG discussions will take place in 2016 to co-ordinate work on evolving language.</p> <p><i>23 September is Bi Visibility Day – now listed in the UNISON diary.</i></p>

### **Motion 30 : Proportionality**

Expressed concern at the continued under-representation of women in UNISON in certain structures. Called on the NWC to work with other SOGs, LAOS etc to develop new strategies for achieving proportionality and fair representation.

AIM	UPDATE
To meet UNISON's rule book commitment to proportionality and fair representation.	<p>RWCs were asked to monitor proportionality and fair representation at a regional level, and to raise any areas of concern. Regional activities to promote greater involvement of women activists are reported under section 3. Discussions have also taken place with LAOS on future training and development, and with the strategic organising unit who are working with regions on recruiting and organising in hard to reach areas.</p> <p>Work will also take place early in the new year on further guidance on proportionality and women's representation.</p>

### **Motion 45 : The EGA gallery – a part of women's history**

Motion 45 was not reached. It asked the NWC to explore the potential for increasing visitor numbers to the EGA gallery. Called on the NWC to improve information available through the website, social media and tourist listings; produce a leaflet for visitors.

AIM	UPDATE
To increase visitor numbers and to improve their experience of visiting the EGA gallery.	A leaflet for visitors to the gallery has been produced. This is available in hard copy and as a PDF, and is used to promote the gallery, including distribution of copies to other related museums/exhibition.



## **1.2 Women in the workplace**

### **Motion 3 : The impact of zero hours contracts on women**

Highlighted the issues facing women working on zero hours contracts (ZHC). Called on the NWC to investigate the feasibility of a survey on the use of ZHCs and pressurise government to halt the practice.

AIM	UPDATE
To halt the use of zero hours contracts, or at least to improve the terms under which they are used.	Noted that this issue is firmly on the mainstream UNISON agenda, and that commitments were secured from the Labour Party prior to the general election. Subsequently it was referred to Labour Link for the Labour Party Policy Forum (LPPF) to ensure that the issue remains on the agenda.

AIM	UPDATE
M3 : Zero hours contracts continued	The NWC also referred this issue to regions and to service groups nationally with a request that they consider Freedom of Information requests to establish the spread of ZHCs.

#### **Motion 5 : Changes to working hours**

Highlighted the disproportionate impact on women of the 24/7 culture of social care work. Called on the NWC to work with service groups and others to revise guidance and negotiate policies on flexible working and shift patterns which do not penalise women workers.

AIM	UPDATE
To improve the working lives of women working flexibly and on shift patterns.	<p>It is anticipated that the government will announce a further review of the Equality Act, at which point updated guidance on the use of the Equality Act and equivalent legislation in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales will be produced.</p> <p>The NWC also referred this issue to service group nationally with a request that they review their existing guidance to ensure it is current.</p>

#### **Motion 6 : Legal equality facility time for women**

Highlighted the need for facility time for women equality reps. Called on the NWC to work with the TUC and Labour Link to pressurise the government into including a statutory right to facility time for these reps.

AIM	UPDATE
To secure paid facility time for equality reps.	<p>The government have refused to consider facility time for equality reps and that position is unlikely to change, particularly in view of measures proposed within the Trade Union Bill.</p> <p>The NWC requested that service groups consider guidance to branches on negotiating local arrangements, although they recognised that achieving this will be difficult in the current climate.</p>

#### **Motion 7 : Equal pay**

Noted that the gender pay gap still exists and progress is not being made. Called on the NWC to continue to campaign on equal pay; to provide further information and training on equal pay audits; monitor existing pay structures to ensure that they are equality proofed.

AIM	UPDATE
To achieve equal pay for women and close the gender pay gap.	<p>Equal pay remains on the mainstream UNISON agenda, with continued lobbying of government for effective measures to close the gender pay gap.</p> <p>The NWC requested that all service groups seek to ensure that this is prioritised in pay negotiations, and highlighted the role of the Equality Act and equivalent devolved legislation in pushing for equality proofed pay settlements.</p> <p>UNISON has responded also to the government consultation on Section 78 of the Equality Act (pay transparency) and to the Select Committee Inquiry into closing the gender pay gap for older women. We were also involved in early discussions with the Government Equalities Office (GEO) on related issues.</p> <p>Information provided by UNISON was used to brief MPs in the July Opposition Day debate on equal pay, and was referred to Labour Link for the Labour Party Policy Forum.</p>

#### **Motion 9 : Women apprentices**

Noted the underrepresentation of women in traditionally male-dominated apprenticeship schemes. Called on the NWC to promote wider access to women in these areas.

AIM	UPDATE
To have greater representation of women in non-traditional industries.	<p>Information has been circulated on the TUC modern apprenticeships campaign.</p> <p>The importance of encouraging young women to enter non-traditional careers, including through apprenticeships, has been raised with the Government Equalities Office (GEO) as part of a strategy for closing the gender pay gap.</p>

#### **Motion 36 : Petitioning the European parliament on retraining of women public sector workers facing redundancy**

Motion 36 was not reached. It drew attention to the possibility of petitioning the European parliament on funding for retraining for public sector workers made redundant as a result of government austerity measures. Called on the NWC to work within UNISON to organise such a petition.

The motion was referred to service groups and to the international department.

## 1.3 Women and Politics / the economy

### **Motion 10 : Gender budgeting – counting the cost**

Noted the disproportionate impact on women of the government's austerity measures, and UNISON work with the Women's Budget Group on this issue. Called on the NWC to develop training and to publicise information on both the research and the training available.

### **Motion 11 : Women against cuts**

Highlighted the impact of the government's austerity measures. Called on the NWC to continue to campaign against the cuts.

AIM	UPDATE
To campaign against and raise awareness of the impact of austerity measures on women and to equip women to challenge budget decision making.	<p>The impact of austerity measures on women continues to be at the core of UNISON's agenda, and informs all the union's work on budgetary constraints, cuts to jobs and services.</p> <p>Section 3 includes updates on regional work on gender budgeting.</p> <p>This issue was also referred to service groups for their attention. UNISON continues to have a working relationship with the Women's Budget Group and the potential for further joint educational work is under discussion.</p>

### **TAX CREDITS VICTORY**

National women's conference has debated cuts in working tax credits and other means of supporting working families. UNISON's campaign to prevent the government implementing tax credit cuts achieved a significant victory. The government chose to use a "statutory instrument" rather than a proper Parliamentary Bill to introduce the measures, and this move backfired, with the House of Lords voting to delay the cuts and to compensate those affected. The full story can be found here, along with the online calculator UNISON provided to allow people to work out how they would be affected:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/2015/10/lords-tax-credits-vote-is-an-important-first-step>

### **Motion 31 : Women and politics – why your vote counts**

### **Motion 32 : Organising against UKIP and the far right**

### **Motion 33 : Women voting for UKIP**

Highlighted the impact of another term of Tory government or UKIP in parliament and the importance of ensuring that women members vote Labour in defence of public services. Called on the NWC to produce and re-issue materials encouraging all women to register, use their vote and to vote Labour; encourage women to play a greater part in political life, including local activism, and to take up training opportunities; support Labour women candidates; raise awareness of the risks in voting Tory or UKIP; campaign against the far right; produce a myth buster targeted at women members, including retired members.

AIM	UPDATE
For all women members to vote Labour in elections	<p>Targeted work took place prior to the general election, and will continue with European, regional and local elections where appropriate. This included :</p> <p>Encouraging women to use their vote; Using women's networks to explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the importance of voting</li> <li>• the impact of Tory policy</li> <li>• the dangers of UKIP</li> </ul> <p>Circulating "Why women's votes count" to all committee members and regional women's officers/contacts;</p> <p>Engaging with the Labour Party women's votes tour at national and regional level.</p>
Increase women's participation in political life	<p>Promoted the benefits of involvement in local, regional and national politics, and UNISON/Labour Party political engagement training. Shared information on education and training opportunities. Reports on regional activities and training are included at section 3. A seminar and Labour Link taster fringe have been organised for women's conference 2016.</p>
Defeat the far right in this election, and into the future	<p>The committee and members made use of social media to share information about far right organisations, as well as supporting UNISON mainstream campaigning activities including Hope Not Hate events, petitions and regional activities.</p>

## Sub-committee 2

### 2.1 Women in society

#### **Motion 8 : Harmonisation of in work threshold and benefit cap**

Drew attention to the complicated and unjust system for claiming benefits, and to the need for a just and fair entitlement to living and housing assistance.

Called on the NWC to work with *There For You* to provide guidance; campaign against unfair provisions under Universal Credit and to fair access to assistance.

AIM	UPDATE
To ensure fair access to welfare benefits to enable a decent standard of living.	<p>Work on universal credit and the proposed benefit cap is led by the policy department, with input from other sections as appropriate.</p> <p>Information has been circulated via mainstream channels, to women's networks and via social media on UNISON's campaigning and lobbying activities, together with information from UNISON There for You. Information on regional activities is contained in section 3.</p>

### **Motion 12 : Women and housing**

Drew attention to the UK housing crisis and the vulnerability of women in shared accommodation. Called on the NWC to campaign to abolish the bedroom tax and for a government house building programme; produce guidance on safe reporting of sub-standing housing.

AIM	UPDATE
Safe and affordable housing for all.	The Generation Rent housing campaign has been promoted on Facebook and Twitter and circulated via women's networks. The Policy Department lead on housing issues, but have continued to liaise closely with officers and to consider NWC policy.

### **Motion 13 : Attack on child benefit**

Drew attention to the government's attack on child benefit. Called on the NWC to secure a Labour Party commitment to reinstating child benefit as a universal right and to lift the freeze.

AIM	UPDATE
Universal and properly funded child benefit.	In the light of the general election result, UNISON continues to campaign against government proposals which child benefit, working with partner organisations where appropriate.

### **Motion 14 : Women in prison**

Reported on the failure of the government to act on the findings of the Corston report into women in prison, and the harsh treatment women experience in the criminal justice system. Called on the NWC to campaign for the implementation of the Corston report and for fairer treatment of women offenders.

AIM	UPDATE
Fair treatment of women offenders, including implementation of the Corston report recommendations.	<p>Officers met with Women in Prison charity, and looked at how UNISON can support and promote their work, and raise awareness of issues e.g. the need to support women when they leave prison, the mental health problems, how families are too far from prisons to be able to visit isolating the women inmates. Subsequently UNISON signed up to the Women in Prison manifesto pre the general election, and will continue to campaign alongside the organisation.</p> <p>Regions were encouraged to make contact with local prisons to offer practical support to women prisoners. This approach has been particularly successful in Northern Ireland for a number of years, as reported in Section 3.</p>

### **Motion 37 : Credit unions and employer loans**

Motion 37 was not reached. It expressed concern at the spread of payday loan companies, and identified alternatives including credit unions and employer salary advances. Called on the NWC to work with There for You to promote the UNISON credit union service; explore issuing guidance on negotiating employer salary advance schemes.

AIM	UPDATE
To provide information on alternatives to payday loan companies.	<p>Information from There for You on credit union membership and engagement and sources of advice and help has been circulated through the usual channels.</p> <p>Service groups were asked to explore whether salary advance schemes are already available, and if not, whether there is potential for such assistance to be offered to members.</p>

## **2.2 Women's health**

Thompson's Solicitors sponsor UNISON's women's health packs – folders which contain leaflets from our partner organisations on health issues (those identified from women's conference decisions), recruitment leaflets and UNISON guidance. These are very popular with women's networks and committees as a resource for women's events and to attract potential members. The NWC takes the view that signposting support is more appropriate than issuing our own guidance on health issues, other than those related to bargaining and workplace support.

Service groups have also been asked to support branches in negotiating workplace sickness absence schemes which do not penalise women with gender specific health issues.



**Motion 15 : Young women, stress and mental health****Motion 16 : Marginalisation of mental health, the impact on women**

Highlighted the growing problem of stress and mental health problems, exacerbated by work pressures, and the taboo nature of mental health problems, also the cuts to mental health services under the coalition government. Called on the NWC to work with service groups to ensure that adequate provision is made to support employees experiencing stress and mental health problems; promote support for National Mental Health Day on 10 October 2015; work with Labour Link to ensure proper investment in mental health services; encourage regions to monitor cuts in mental health services and the impact on staff; campaign with appropriate partners for a fairer funding settlement for local government.

AIM	UPDATE
Support for workers experiencing stress and mental health problems in the workplace.	Consideration is to be given to a joint SOG and young members' survey on mental health issues, linked to promotion of National Mental Health Day. The issue was also referred to UNISON's health and safety officer unit, with a particular focus on issues for young women.  10 October is WHO World Mental Health Day – now listed in the UNISON diary.

**Motion 17 : Black women and fibroids**

Highlighted the increased impact of fibroids on Black women and the lack of awareness of various treatment options. Called on the NWC to work with the NBMC raise awareness of the condition and the treatment alternatives, including working with community organisations; work with the health service group to influence clinical commissioning groups and Public Health England on this issue.

**Motion 19 : Endometriosis and Adenomyosis – a workplace issue**

Highlighted the impact endometriosis and adenomyosis on women's working lives; the lack of information and support for women suffering these conditions. Called on the NWC to raise awareness of the conditions; explore guidance on supporting affected women, including sickness absence management; investigate the inclusion of these conditions under the provisions of the Equality Act.

AIM	UPDATE
Better treatment options for Black women suffering fibroids.  Greater workplace support for women suffering endometriosis and adenomyosis.	A bargaining factsheet focusing on women's reproductive health issues is to be included in the women's health pack, along with updated information on endometriosis and fibroids.

## **Motion 42 : Post natal depression and disability discrimination**

This motion was not reached and was not prioritised as there is already a comprehensive UNISON guide to negotiating on maternity rights, and guidance on negotiating reasonable adjustments.

Highlighted the failure of the Equality Act to cover women suffering postnatal depression. Called on the NWC to produce guidance on postnatal depression and its potential relationship with disability status and reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act. Include maternity rights of disabled women in existing guidance on maternity rights.

### **Maternity Rights**

On 24 July 2015, the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) and the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published the first findings of their joint, £1m research study into pregnancy and maternity discrimination at work. Despite the vast majority of the more than 3,000 employers surveyed reporting the statutory legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity to be both reasonable *and* easy to implement, the study found that:

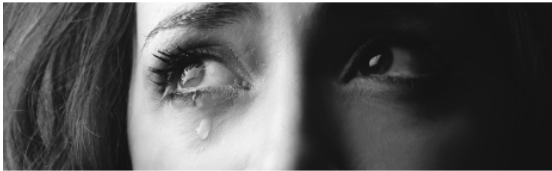
- As many as 54,000 pregnant women and new mothers - one in nine - are forced out of their job each year. Single mothers and younger mothers (aged under 25) are at particular risk, especially during pregnancy and maternity leave, as are women working in adult social care, childcare, hairdressing and other service occupations.
- One in four of the employers surveyed (wrongly) believe that it is reasonable to ask women candidates about their plans to have children.
- One in 10 of the women surveyed said they were discouraged from attending antenatal appointments, and one in nine reported being encouraged to start maternity leave earlier than they wanted to.
- One in six new mothers reported suffering a negative impact on their health or stress levels because of poor treatment at work.


UNISON is a partner in the Alliance Against Pregnancy Discrimination, which believes that the government must take effective action, to include :

- Ministers sending a strong message to employers that there is simply no excuse to flout the law on pregnancy and maternity discrimination.
- Developing a strong, high-profile information campaign aimed at improving both women's awareness of their rights, and employers' understanding of their legal obligations and the business benefits of 'doing the right thing'.
- Delivering a significant injection of funding into the specialist information and advice services that women clearly need to help protect their rights at work.
- Abolishing - or, at the very least, greatly reducing - the employment tribunal fees of up to £1,200 introduced in July 2013.

A briefing was issued to all MPs after the release of the report, with information from that briefing being used to ask questions in the House of Commons. UNISON will continue to work with the Alliance to campaign on these issues.

## 2.3 Ending violence against women





**We won't look the other way**

Domestic abuse takes many forms – physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and financial and it affects victims in the workplace and beyond. That's why it's an issue for everyone including UNISON.

**We are here to help and support our members.**

- We provide emergency assistance, including financial aid if necessary, through our charity There For You.
- We negotiate workplace policies to support and assist staff experiencing domestic abuse.

Anyone can be a victim, regardless of gender, age, culture, ethnic origin, disability or sexual orientation and anyone can be a perpetrator – partners, spouses, parents, children or carers.

**So if you need our help go to [unison.org.uk/get-help](http://unison.org.uk/get-help) or call our trained advisors on 0207 121 5620 (Monday to Friday).**

You can also call UNISON on 0800 0 857 857 (text phone 0800 0 967 968). Lines are open 6am-midnight, Monday to Friday, and 9am-4pm on Saturdays or email [thereforyou@unison.co.uk](mailto:thereforyou@unison.co.uk)

Your branch may also be able to help. You can contact them directly or through UNISONdirect – details above.

**UNISON – we won't look the other way**

### UNISON – supporting our members

We recognise the impact that domestic abuse has on our members' lives. Support and understanding from your employer can make all the difference if you are a survivor, or if you are trying to escape.

We take the lead in negotiating workplace policies to support and assist staff experiencing domestic abuse, in a confidential and safe way. If you need help, we are here for you.

**UNISON – protecting jobs and services**

Domestic abuse and violence against women services have been badly affected by the government's austerity measures.

We continue to campaign to protect properly funded dedicated services, and for more support to be available to victims.


**UNISON – campaigning for change**

Domestic abuse is not only about violence. It also takes away victims' independence and freedom to make their own decisions and prevents them from living free from harm and fear.


We have successfully lobbied for changes in the law that properly recognise the extent of abuse, which now include controlling and coercive behaviours and we are campaigning for more protection for victims.

For further information on any of these issues, including a guide to negotiating workplace policies on domestic abuse, go to [unison.org.uk/women](http://unison.org.uk/women)


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### Motion 22 : When a definition is not enough

### Motion 25 : Intimate terrorism and coercive control

Welcomed the new definition of domestic violence to include coercive control and psychological abuse, but noted that the law also needs amending to reflect this new definition. Called on the NWC to work with appropriate bodies to bring about the necessary legislative change. Also to raise awareness of the new definition and update UNISON guidance.

AIM	UPDATE
To change the law to better reflect the new definition of domestic abuse and the cumulative impact of such abuse.	UNISON continues to work with Women's Aid and the End Violence Against Women Coalition, promoting and supporting their campaigns. Where regions have engaged in partnership working, this is reported in Section 3.
Ensure that UNISON guidance is updated and members are aware of the new definition.	Updated guidance has been issued, taking on board the legislative changes. A new leaflet and poster to raise awareness of domestic violence as a workplace issue have also been produced.

**Motion 23 : Older women and domestic violence**

Expressed concern at the particular issues affecting older/elderly women victims of domestic abuse and the barriers to their disclosing such abuse. Called on the NWC to research the issue and raise awareness.

AIM	UPDATE
To create an environment in which older/elderly women are supported in disclosing and escaping domestic abuse.	Links have been made with organisations supporting older women and the potential for joint work/campaigning is being explored.

**Motion 24 : Domestic violence – a gendered issue**

Identified why domestic violence remains a gendered issue. Called on the NWC to work with the NEC to issue guidance to branches on supporting women members who allege violence by another member. (Selected as NDC motion by national women's conference).

AIM	UPDATE
For guidance to be available to branches to support a woman member in the event of her reporting violence by another member.	The NWC motion was carried without opposition. Work is now underway on guidance, which will be available in 2016.

**Motion 29 : Disabled trafficked women's rights – what rights?**

Highlighted the additional barriers facing disabled trafficked women in escaping their persecutors. Called on the NWC to work with appropriate bodies to develop a campaigning charter to stop this exploitation.

**Motion 38 : Trafficking/modern slavery – more profit less risk than drug smuggling**

This motion was not reached but is incorporated in existing work by the NWC. It reported on the endemic problem of trafficked people, including women and children in prostitution and forced labour. Called on the NWC to work with partner organisations to campaign against trafficking and to lobby the government to develop legislation against the use of forced labour in company supply chains.

*30 July is the UN World Day against Trafficking in Persons – now listed in the UNISON diary.*

AIM	UPDATE
To work with others to bring about an end to trafficking.	At the beginning of June it became a criminal offence to pay for sex in Northern Ireland, while people exploited through the sex trade are now decriminalised. As such, Northern Ireland has become the first part of the UK to adopt the Sex Buyer Law.

### **Amnesty International and sex workers**

In November 2015 a formal letter of complaint was sent to Amnesty International following their decision to develop and adopt a policy on the total decriminalisation of sex work, which is contrary to UNISON policy.

In June 2010 NDC adopted a resolution which committed the union to actively supporting all proposals which decriminalise the selling of sex acts whilst criminalising the purchase of sex acts and those who profit from the sale of others. Further, UNISON recognises prostitution as a form of gender based violence. The Amnesty decision is contrary to this, and their evidence is flawed, as one of the 'expert advisers' has subsequently been convicted of trafficking. Currently there is no proposal to actively campaign on this issue in the UK, but UNISON will continue to oppose the policy and to raise our concerns wherever possible.

### **Motion 35 : Stop porn culture**

Highlighted the damaging impact that easy access to pornography has on women's lives. Called on the NWC to raise awareness of the harm caused, seek legislative change and raise awareness of our policy on pornography.

AIM	UPDATE
To change the culture where pornography is easily accessible and normalised.	UNISON has continued to work with UK Feminista and Object, to promote their campaigns through women's networks and social media.

### **Composite A : Female genital mutilation**

Reported on the harm caused to women by female genital mutilation (FGM) and other forms of cultural violence/mutilation, and the failure of the law to protect these girls and women. Called on the NWC to work with other relevant bodies to raise awareness amongst our members and to signpost support, and to work with partners to end the practice.

*6 February is the UN International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation – now listed in the UNISON diary .*

AIM	UPDATE
To end FGM and other forms of cultural violence/mutilation of women.	<p>Links have been made with FORWARD, the leading FGM campaigning organisation. UNISON was able to provide assistance with information from Connect (UNISON's lobbying organisation) on parliamentary processes. The potential for joint working has also been identified, and a speaker has been invited to address national women's conference 2016. The Home Office/FORWARD leaflet about FGM is now included in the women's health packs.</p> <p>UNISON is also supporting the Amnesty International <i>My Body My Rights</i> campaign, which includes work to eradicate FGM. Through this partnership work it is hoped to raise awareness of the issue and signpost sources of help for members who may encounter young girls at risk of FGM.</p>

## 2.4 International

### **Motion 34 : Beyond the European elections – what happens next?**

Highlighted the importance of work after the general election to work internationally to defend workers rights and to defeat the far right. Called on the NWC to work with the international department on appropriate campaigns; consider developing training on international solidarity campaigns; work with other SOGs on joint campaigning on equality rights; signpost information on anti hate crime campaigns including ILGA Europe's website.

AIM	UDPATE
To prevent the spread of UKIP and far right parties, and to defend workers' rights.	This work is taken on board in motions on women and voting, and a further motion to women's conference 2016 on "What has Europe ever done for us?"

### **Motion 39 : Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership**

This motion was not reached. It reported on the potential damaging impact on public services and workers' rights as a result of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Called upon the NWC to work with appropriate bodies, including international unions, to campaign against TTIP and to raise awareness of its implications.

AIM	UPDATE
To stop the implementation of TTIP, or at least to protect public services from the worst impact.	<p>The NWC submitted a motion to Local government conference which was carried and that work therefore becomes the property of the service group. The TTIP motion on the NDC agenda also carried and will therefore be taken on board in the national work programme.</p> <p>The 38 Degrees TTIP campaign has been promoted on Facebook and through women's networks. UNISON news items and the call to write to MEPs on voting on TTIP (part of TUC going to work campaign) have also been promoted via social media.</p>

## **The following international motions were not reached**

### **Motion 40 : Women in unions – encouraging an international perspective**

Reports on the international work which UNISON is involved in. Called on the NWC to become more actively involved in international work and campaigning.

### **Motion 41 : Women as weapons of war**

Highlights the abuse of women in conflict zones and the failure of governments to protect those women. Called on the NWC to engage with other organisations working in the field of ending violence against women internationally.

### **Motion 43 : The position of women in today's world**

Highlights the precarious position of women internationally and in the UK despite UN resolutions designed to protect them. Called on the NWC to campaign for implementation of UN resolutions; campaign against domestic attacks on women's and workers' rights including access to justice.

### **Motion 44 : CEDAW**

Reports on the failure of the UK government to comply with CEDAW recommendations. Called on the NWC to work with appropriate bodies on guidance to be used in appropriate negotiations where the recommendations apply.

The NWC strive to ensure that international work and campaigning is always clearly signposted for members. The motions were referred to the international department/committee, to be taken on board in consideration of their work programme.

UNISON continues to work with the Women's Resource Centre and others as appropriate, to further the aims of CEDAW.

## **Gloria Mills elected as president of ETUC women's committee**

Congratulations to Gloria Mills, UNISON's national secretary, equalities, who has been elected president of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) women's committee for the next four years. Gloria is the first Black woman to hold the post, and in this role she will lead for the European trade union movement on issues such as parental rights, equal pay and the impact of austerity on women as public services users and providers.

## REGIONAL REPORTS

### Eastern

Our 2015 RWC year started well in March with a well attended and stimulating policy weekend. We took the opportunity to reflect on women's campaigning initiatives, landmarks in women's history and we watched and discussed the BBC documentary 'angry women'.

We also drew up our priorities for 2015, developing our work plan for the forthcoming year. We had planned to organise and facilitate a one day women's conference within the region, advertising this in all branches, with branch women's officers and women workplace representatives.

The purpose of this conference was to encourage women's increased participation and attendance at national women's conference; promote self-organisation, proportionality and fair representation. We planned to provide information on UNISON campaigns of interest to women and to distribute the UNISON women's health packs. We had planned to have conference sessions or workshops on topics such as the Equality Act 2010 update; stress awareness; women and mental health issues; setting up branch women's groups and why women's self-organisation?

Unfortunately, our bid for funding for this event was turned down but we plan to reapply in the New Year.

We are pleased that the one women-only course (assertiveness) on the regional core education programme recruited well, was successful and very well received by those women who attended.

Outside of UNISON activism, members of the RWC have been actively involved in the setting up the Supporting Sisters Calais campaign, regularly collecting donations of sanitary wear and taking them to Calais. Donations have come from a number of sources, including work place collections. The project continues to develop into new areas.

Members of the RWC have been active in tackling the issue of the "missing millions", the people who will be lost off the electoral register due to individual voter registration. The members successfully negotiated space in an Odeon cinema to speak to people coming out of seeing the new film Suffragette, encouraging them to use their vote and ensure they are on the new electoral register.

Online and face to face campaigning has also been undertaken on the tampon tax campaign, tax credits and the Trade Union Bill.

We hope for a more active 2016.

### East Midlands

During 2015 the UNISON East Midlands women's network organised to support UNISON policies during the general election campaign and against austerity policies after it. There was also a lot of region-wide activity to mark International Women's Day with organising events on why women should join UNISON.

The region's equality lunch and learn sessions (1 hour workshops with food) in branches continue to attract large audiences. The session on supporting older women has frequently been standing room only and has clearly touched a nerve as older women workers speak out about their experiences.



As a result of the ensuing debates two employers have responded with agreement to draw up specific policies on supporting women and the menopause.

The other two sessions that attract high attendance are on sickness absence and supporting Black workers.

Many women workers with conditions that are probably disabilities feel unjustly penalised by their employer's absences procedures. The lunch and learn session provides information that may help in tackling women's situations.

Supporting Black workers lunch and learn discussed Challenging Racism in the Workplace and was attended by many Black women workers.

The 2015 regional plan had a separate section on discrimination focussing on harassment and bullying and on sickness absence. The women's network participated in the discussions that resulted in these two issues being prioritised. Two surveys on the issues were circulated to members during September 2015 and a report of the results is currently being drafted. The aim is to see which branches have issues which should be raised at collective bargaining meetings. This will include women's experiences of harassment and bullying and of sickness absence procedures. This will involve asking employers for relevant statistics on the women they employ to enable analysis that shows where sex discrimination is occurring. *Scrub the TUB! Protect women's employment rights* is the regional women's network's response to the Trade Union Bill. The network feels that campaigning against the bill should focus on worker's rights as opposed to defending trade unions.

The network has produced a flyer explaining that the bill would severely restrict women workers' rights to organise together to defend their employment rights. Women workers have organised at work for nearly 150 years

to improve their working conditions. The TU Bill could take us back to when women were scrubbing in tubs – leaving us unable to adequately protect maternity, equal pay, child care support and other rights. Women workers fought long and hard for their right to join trade unions.

Women from the network were involved in the health and safety committee's briefing event for stewards on domestic abuse. The guest speaker at the event was UNISON's national women's officer Sharon Greene. Material from national women's organisations (Women's Aid, National Abortion Campaign, Fawcett Society) has been regularly circulated to all members of the women's network. This has also helped with local organising and campaigning and has supported women in branches to set up local UNISON women groups.

Two equality network meetings have been held this year which the network have been actively involved with. These have provided opportunities for networking and joint working with the other regional SOGs. Conference skills sessions continue to be held for new delegates to national women's conference.

## **Greater London**

A lot of work was done at the beginning of the year and subsequently things have been quieter due to the cancellation of our July meeting because of the tube strike!

We held our AGM in October; all the key positions have been filled via an election process. We have made a decision to extend the AGM to 3 hours to enable us to have a guest speaker. Attendance at the AGM was higher this year than previous years. The guest speaker was Anne Field from Britain@work Oral History Group; she gave a very informative presentation about the Wapping Dispute and how interviews with workers are being used to capture what really happened and not just a media view of what happened.

Work centred around two key aims this year:

1. better communications with women members across greater London region and widening our networks;
2. providing more training and support for women activists in the region.

The publicity and campaigns officer post, and education officer post were filled after being vacant for a number of years.

A general election flyer was produced and circulated to encourage women to use their vote. Over the next year the committee will be looking at how to expand and use our networks of women in GLR to support key regional priorities such as the campaign against the Trade Union Bill and to raise awareness of key issues affecting women such as FGM.

In March of this year the committee piloted a training and networking event for women's officers and contacts. This included a range of workshops and speakers and an evening social in celebration of International Women's Day. The event received very positive feedback and the committee has decided to run the event again in 2016. This time the invitation will be extended to all elected branch officers who are women.

## **Northern**

The women's network has had an extremely busy 2015, and the election of a Tory government is having serious repercussions in the North East in respect of cuts to public services and job losses. The impact on the lives of women in the region of job insecurity and welfare reform continues to be part of the campaigning work of the network. The network is grateful for the continued support and encouragement given by Clare Williams, regional convenor and Nicky Ramanandi as deputy convenor who encourage women's participation and path into leadership roles within the region and at national level.

Our policy weekend in September took as its theme 'your rights, human rights, women's rights'. Thompson solicitors' presentation highlighted the importance of human rights for women. This led to our motion 'women's rights, trade union rights, human rights'. Through the weekend we also looked at women's hidden history, and how we still have to ensure that women's voices are heard. Tax credits were seen as a key issue for women, as was childcare.

Continuing our commitment to working closer with other regional self-organised groups, the network and the regional Black members' forum organised a day on violence against women and girls looking at the issues of sexual grooming, FGM, honour-based violence and forced marriage. The event was open to members, practitioners, community groups and the voluntary sector. The feedback highlighted that this was an excellent event which gave delegates the ability to go back to their workforces, share best practice and resources from the day.

Women from the network were actively involved in the election campaign for the general election and local elections. The network produced its own women's manifesto for the region taking a holistic view of women's issues and what we expect from elected representatives at all levels. Part of our election work was to encourage women to register and vote. In support of this a leaflet was produced for distribution through branches and was used as a resource on recruitment stalls.

In addition on Easter Monday and 13 April the network organised 2 stalls at Redcar racecourse, where activists dressed as suffragettes to encourage women to register to vote and ran a mock election for children with children's characters as candidates.

Continuing our campaign on access to domestic abuse services for women in employment, there was a fringe meeting at national delegate conference with the CEO of My Sister's Place, Middlesbrough who has been our partner in the campaign 'The price of safety'. Through the offices of Andy MacDonald MP for Middlesbrough we also had an early day motion in parliament (756 Means testing for female victims of domestic violence) in February which attracted 37 signatures. Andy followed this up with a question in the House of Commons on women's access to domestic abuse services.

Access to legal aid forms part of our campaign to highlight this government's attacks on women's access to justice in contravention of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

In addition the network has been working on a manifesto on childcare which is highlighting the increasing barrier this is becoming to women's employment.

The network continues to be leading on the region's anti-poverty strategy, through highlighting the impact that welfare reform is having on our women members, supporting the Living Wage campaign and making the case for fair pay in the public sector.

In collaboration with the region's education committee, the network continues to support and develop women-only training.

On international solidarity, the network continues to support the Corteros women's committee and the women's sugar cane cutters' committee in the Valle del Cauca area of Colombia, in their organising and capacity building work.

Women in the northern region are at the forefront of taking our campaigning out into our communities and working with sister trade unions through our Public Services

Alliance via the northern TUC and our own area forums.

While this year has been a particularly difficult one for women members with attacks coming on all fronts, it is through bringing women together that we see the true potential of UNISON. Despite all the challenges that we face, UNISON women are leading the way in the struggle to improve not only our members' lives but those of the communities we live in.

## **Northern Ireland**

The women's committee has 50 members representing all branches in the region. In 2015, the committee overhauled its constitution to encourage new participation. Over the past year, committee members participated extensively in a wide range of organising and campaigning activity. The following is a synopsis.

*UNISON national women's conference:* committee members fully participated in all UNISON national and regional seminars. At national women's conference 2015 we were concerned that our motion on 'The Impoverishment of Women' was ruled out of order. The committee continues to work on all the key issues in the motion impacting on our women members including:

- the campaign against welfare and benefit cuts;
- the campaign to eliminate zero hours contracts;
- the campaign for a Living Wage;
- domestic violence partnerships;
- women's health;
- UNISON women's participation and training programme.

The ICTU biennial women's seminar took place on 5 and 6 March 2015 in Belfast and a full UNISON delegation attended. The UNISON delegation as usual played a prominent role in the seminar.

The seminar theme was 'Changing the Record: Women's Views, Women's Voices'.

*ICTU women's committee:* UNISON women members are represented on the ICTU committee by Anne Speed and Margaret McKee. Both, along with the regional secretary, have been active participants in the TU Women's Council of the Isles covering the ICTU, STUC, Wales TUC and TUC. A further meeting of the council took place in October 2015. UNISON put the ETUC emergency motion on the peace process on the agenda.

*International Women's Day:* UNISON women participated in a wide range of activities in the lead up to the IWD march in Belfast on 8 March. The theme was *Equality - Make it Happen*.

*Regional education programme:* Committee members continued to deliver a significant element of the regional education programme with 164 women members attending our *Building confidence for women; Pathways; Women's health and history; and Women here and now* courses. These courses are particularly designed to encourage more women to become active. The large majority of new women stewards in the steward's induction programme again came through this route in 2014/2015. The *Making women seen and heard* programme has recently been re-vamped to include the history of the trade union movement and the history of our welfare state and NHS.

The new *Champions for change* course, piloted by the women's committee, is designed to challenge growing sectarianism and to forge a greater understanding of the anti-discrimination laws on religious belief and political opinion. Committee members have received training from 'Cultural Exchange' to deliver this programme and have committed to increasing steward participation on this important 2-day course. Women's committee members have contributed to the spectacular increase in

women stewards becoming accredited health and safety representatives.

*The impact of welfare cuts on women:* To date welfare reform has been blocked in NI and UNISON plays a key role in the campaign against welfare cuts. There are now more people in work receiving benefits than there are out of work claimants here.

The UNISON clinics and workshops supported by the women's committee and branches have demonstrated the importance of the welfare benefit system to our members and their families and the devastating consequences of proposed reform. The women's committee will play a vital role in the forthcoming campaign on the removal of tax credits given that the majority affected will be UNISON women members.

*Women in prisons:* Further training sessions have taken place in Hydebank Prison delivering the *Women's health and history* course. Two additional committee members are joining the team and further training has been arranged. A number of committee members are preparing to deliver *Building confidence for women* to prisoners before the end of the year. On the back of this project the women's committee will shortly consider how it might also support women in prisons in Columbia.

*Violence against women:* The committee continues to monitor and promote our domestic violence programme. Trained UNISON women stewards continue to provide domestic abuse support to staff across health trusts. Currently we are monitoring the success of the project and developing a new initiative with Onus.

*ASIST suicide training:* Following the successful involvement of the women's committee members in the ASIST suicide training last year, the women's committee is ensuring that it is structured into our main education programme.



**Campaigns & demonstrations:** Throughout the year committee members continued to play a full and active role in UNISON demonstrations. We have been actively involved in the public marches and demonstrations in support of equal marriage, against welfare cuts, in the May Day rally and in the rallies and marches across Northern Ireland on 13<sup>th</sup> March during the public services strike against cuts.

**NHS care homes:** In our NHS care homes the majority of residents and majority of staff are women. Consequently the women's committee has been actively involved in the 2-year long campaign against closure.

**Inez McCormack Trust:** The women's committee has been actively involved in promoting the Film, *Inez – A Challenging Woman* as a tool to encourage the engagement of our women members in key issues affecting them. In January 2015 the committee piloted some discussion materials alongside the film. These are now being developed as part of the education programme. The women's committee was delighted to have hosted the fringe meeting at NDC 2015 which show-cased Inez's life and which has resulted in extensive positive feedback from women across the union.

**International Covenant on Social Economic and Cultural Rights:** The committee was involved in preparing evidence to be incorporated into the UNISON submission to the UN committee on key issues affecting women at work, in unions and in society. This was considered by the UN committee in Geneva in October.

The comprehensive motion submitted by the NI region to NDC 2015 on resetting the equality agenda commits UNISON as a whole to submit evidence. The NI women's committee will be using the motion as a framework for our forthcoming work programme. We have submitted a motion on this for the 2016 UNISON women's conference.

## **North West**

### ***Committee workplan***

Our committee work plan for 2014/15 prioritised campaigning on pay; the impact of cuts; violence against women; including domestic abuse and rape; bullying at work; transition from NHS to public health; menopause; women's safety including stalking; stress; women's voice at branch level; bullying and protection at work including women whistleblower's rights; women's health including IVF and surrogacy; endometriosis.

In line with the above we sought to forge links with sister organisations involved in these specific fields and draw on their expertise to better develop our understanding and effectiveness as a women's committee. We held a pre-conference training event at the NW regional office and all who attended found it very useful and now have a better understanding of conference protocols and procedures.

We attended national women's conference and had a vibrant well attended regional meeting. Motions were moved by Audrey Price and Lynne Howatt, our regional delegates, on female genital mutilation, and increasing diversity in women's committees. Both motions were carried unanimously.

The committee's budget identified work to build women's voices in the workplace and branches. Specific bids were additionally submitted to UNISON's general political fund on initiatives which offered support, skills and knowledge to recruit new members and to increase voter participation of women members. We also looked at the issue of women's education within UNISON and looked to celebrate the International Day of the Girl Child with an event to be held in October. We also planned to utilise regional resources in showing the DVD "South Africa at a cross roads".

The committee continued its interest in increasing awareness around female genital mutilation and breast ironing included a workshop on this at its conference. Another passionate issue was succession planning within the committee, and the need to increase the involvement of younger members within the committee. Members were tasked to do what they could at branch level to immediately address this issue.

Although not successful in its GPF bids, the committee was involved in political campaigning for the election and felt that the unsuccessful bid identified a training need that could be pursued through the region. The committee continued in its aims to campaign politically locally, with CLPs and in the community. We also continued to support organisations which did the work of combating violence against women and women's rights issues. The committee was also given materials on how to recognise and deal with workplace bullying and harassment as supplied by the national health and safety committee.

***Regional conference : 25 July 2015  
Growing the Union – increasing the  
participation of young women***

The conference held in July revealed concerns for women around unsociable hours working; bullying and harassment; stress at work; cuts to mental health services; 24/7 working; Devo

MANC; cuts to policing; monitoring in-work poverty and highlighting the real impact of the loss of in-work benefits; the continued attacks on sure start and early years and free childcare.

These issues will be incorporated into any action plan for the coming year's work. The yearly conference concentrated on young member participation; political campaigning; violence against women and the impact of austerity on third sector services; the challenges and realities of organising in the outsourced and private sector and international issues of FGM and breast ironing.

With guest speakers that included Jess Lishak, women's officer from Manchester University students union, Trafford rape crisis centre and senior regional officers, women members received new ideas on how to recruit, engage and retain young women in the union using modern methods. They also heard about the very successful Reclaim the Night initiative which is headed up by Jess and Manchester University students union. We were also made more aware of the realities of organising in low paid working zero hours and casualised contracts work environments, and were given the opportunity to discuss practical ideas on how to address them identifying particular actions delegates could carry out in their branches. Women were also encouraged to take a greater role in political life and told the process of how to do so.

The AGM took place in November, with the following elected to positions.

***Affiliations***

It was agreed to affiliate to Trafford Rape Crisis, Fawcett Society, End Violence Against Women Coalition, Paladin, Maternity Action & Gingerbread.

### ***Acknowledgements***

Acknowledgement is given to Anne McAleer, the recently retired, past president of North West regional council, past chair of the regional women's committee committed activist for health, welfare and TUC women's committee. We acknowledge and thank her for her sisterhood and tremendous contribution over many years.

Also too we mourn the premature loss of our sister and comrade June Poole, past chair of the regional women's committee, committed activist for welfare, women, disabled members, local government and community service group members, TUC, and the Labour Party, who sadly passed away on 21st August. We are thankful for her tremendous contribution, support and sisterhood.

### **Scotland**

The Scottish women's committee have had a full workload this year and the following report highlights some of the work we have undertaken. The committee as usual has played a full role in the region and have taken up the reserve seats on the standing committees such as the health & safety and international committees. Through this activity we are able to ensure that women's concerns are heard throughout the union at a Scottish level. We also contribute to UNISON Scotland responses to Scottish government consultations.

### ***Scottish women's committee conference and AGM***

This year's conference and AGM was held on Saturday 10 October in Discovery Point, Dundee. The event was well attended. The first section was a presentation on the TU Bill and the threat it poses to UNISON. This was followed by a training exercise on how to lobby your MP.

The aim of the exercise was to get delegates prepared for the mass lobby of parliament held on Monday 2nd November. The committee members who acted as the

politicians all hammed it up perfectly. So many thanks to Liz Anne Handibode, Katrina Murray, Pat Rowland and Liz Young.

Peter O'Donnell from Thomson's Solicitors gave a presentation on maternal and paternal rights and holiday pay. This was followed by questions.

Copies of both presentations are available on request.

The final section of the day was the formal AGM. There were motions on the following topics:

- Women voting rights - encouraging women to vote
- Women's representation in Scottish public life
- The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

The feedback from the day has been very positive. In fact, a first time delegate told me that she felt so empowered by the day that she put herself forward for one of the vacant seats on the SWC and was duly elected.

### ***STUC women's conference***

The 88th annual STUC women's conference was held in Dundee on 2 and 3 November. UNISON Scotland submitted motions on women's voting rights - encouraging women to vote, and women's representation in Scottish public life.

As the conference clashed with the planned lobby of Westminster, the STUC women's committee arranged an alternative protest in Dundee. The protest was well attended and in fact some local school children came along to find out what was happening and all left disgusted with what they thought was a very unfair attack on trade unions.

On the afternoon of the first day of business, there was a Scottish Parliament hustings that was chaired by Davena Rankin, co-vice chair STUC women's committee. The panellists were: Nicola Ross (Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party), Sarah Beattie-Smith (Scottish Green Party), Jenny Marra MSP (Scottish Labour Party), Mike Rumbles (Scottish Liberal Democrats) and Shona Robison MSP (Scottish National Party). Questions were taken from the floor and included questions on higher education, abortion rights, access to safe public transport and the impact of the austerity budgets.

Katrina Murray was elected to the standing orders of the STUC women's conference; Eileen Dinning and Davena Rankin were re-elected to the STUC women's committee and Davena Rankin was elected as chair of the committee.

### **Work plan 2015**

After discussion it was agreed that the SWC would move to a 2-year work plan to allow topics to be tackled in depth. This means we continued the work of the previous year under the following headings.

Group A: Inspiring women through education and activism

Group B: Violence against women

Group C: Workplace issues

Full details of the work undertaken by each of the groups can be found in the SWC annual report which can be emailed out on request.

### **South East**

Although the attendance at 2015 national women's conference was very high, the numbers from the South East were good but only a slight improvement on the previous year. The South East women's committee had a number of motions ruled out of order by standing orders committee. However, of the motions that were accepted on – proportionality and stop porn culture, both

were carried. Regional rep Cathy Roblin did a great job moving the motions and leading the delegation meeting. Generally there was good feedback from delegates and visitors about conference and the members thought the workshops were well run and the topics were relevant and interesting. Feedback included however, that it was very frustrating that conference ran out of time to hear all motions.

During women's history month in March there was 24 local branch events held to celebrate both women's history month and International Women's Day. Most events were linked to recruitment days but there was also a few events where talks were given at branch AGM's on various themes related to women's equality e.g. women and the cuts.

Leading on from the events during March, additional bite-sized presentations on women's equality such as pregnancy and maternity discrimination, women's health, bullying and harassment, have been developed to include a short powerpoint which can run continually on a laptop at a recruitment event. Resource handouts have also been developed to accompany the presentations.

The campaigning work of the committee for the first part of this year focussed on the general election and resources, newsletters, postcards and leaflets were developed to raise awareness amongst as many women members as possible of the importance of using their vote. New campaigning resources have been developed throughout the year to be used at recruitment events as mentioned in the above section.

The FFAO project working on increasing the participation of low-paid women and developing a women's leadership training programme came to an end at the beginning of October.



The project has been very successful in carrying out training needs analysis with women already holding senior posts and with women who were new to senior roles in the union. A programme of training was then designed around the training needs highlighted in the training needs analysis. All of the modules that have run to date have been very well attended and the feedback has been extremely positive. Next year's women's leadership programme has been recently been advertised in the updated branch women's officer passport and the regional education programme.

The project also looked at organising amongst low paid women – a group, that is, according to many branches in the South East, traditionally hard to organise. Surveys were sent to low-paid women members in some of the region's largest branches and other work was undertaken including women's meetings in workplaces, particularly women working in outsourced workplaces. A full evaluation report can be found on the South East website under the women's page.

The training courses available to women in the South East region have expanded considerably since the creation of the branch women's officer passport and more recently the creation of the series of training modules for women leaders in UNISON. There are now ten passport courses for women who are officers in their branches and four courses under the women leaders programme.

Every year there are approximately an additional three complementary courses such as assertiveness skills, women's history and women's forum. A copy of the branch women's officer passport can be found on the South East website on the women's page.

This year all courses have been very well attended.

The regional women's forum on 11 to 13 September was held in Eastbourne and was

well attended. 40 women attended from across the region and there were four guest speakers. Monica Hirst spoke on Friday night about UNISON's Organising Space and how women activists can use this technology to share experiences and best practice and generally support one another.

On Saturday morning Sanchita Hosali, Director of the British Institute of Human Rights, spoke about the growing need to raise awareness of what our human rights actually are and how these rights are being threatened by the governments' agenda for a new Bill of Rights. Caroline Lake, UNISON FFAO women's project, spoke on Saturday afternoon on the overall evaluation of the women leaders' project and the forum also heard from three women who are currently on that programme.

On the Sunday, Maggi Ferncombe, the recently appointed South East regional secretary, spoke about the attacks on trade unions and workers and the demands on all of us for the foreseeable future in defending workers and workers rights and how the region will start to take that work forward by developing a new regional strategy.

In general throughout 2015, attendance at the regional women's committee meetings was good. The AGM was well attended and a large number of new women were elected onto the women's committee for 2016. The guest speaker was Chris Coates, former TUC library archivist who spoke on the history of women in the trade union movement and shared some fascinating insights about the barriers that women faced within their own trade unions and how these had to be overcome in order that they could organise and campaign for better pay and better terms and conditions.

## **South West**

### ***Women members in the South West***

There are nearly 70,000 women members in the south west. Many members and activists have engaged in activities right throughout the region; some have attended and in many cases organised:

- anti-austerity demos
- industrial action
- campaigns against TTIP
- opposition to hospital wards' and libraries' closures
- sanitary products' contributions to food banks

Stewards and branch officers have been negotiating to save jobs, opposing the devastating number of cuts and redundancies and representing individual members through a raft of procedures. Other members have joined trades councils and become more active in their communities. There have also been a number of women's groups set up in branches as well as countywide (UNWinD, UNISON women in Dorset). These groups are providing support to women on a range of trade union and employment issues, building confidence and campaigning.

### ***Regional women's committee meetings***

Our RWC has met six times this year. However, there are vacancies and getting all committee members to a meeting at the same time has proved impossible. Several members resigned during the year – some due to new jobs, other commitments and sadly one resigned due to ill-health. Despite this the committee has made progress on the workplan as agreed at our planning day in November 2014. The plan is in line with UNISON's aims and objectives and then revised following national women's conference in February. We welcomed a fantastic six new members to the committee at our AGM in September.

### ***National women's conference, February 2015***

Our delegation this year really did us proud with a total of 14 members speaking to motions, some as first time delegates! Members certainly returned from Southport enthused and ready for the challenges ahead.

Members also attended other national service group and SOG conferences and some spoke on motions addressing women's issues.

The regional women's committee is concerned that many branches are not supporting self-organisation including not sending delegations to national women's conference. We have therefore discussed this with other SOGs and tabled a motion on the January regional council agenda, as well as national women's conference.

### ***Committee work, priorities and events***

***Domestic Abuse*** – (national women's conference, NWC motions 23 & 24) has been a major campaign for the committee. Over 70 members (6 men) have been trained this year through a programme of training courses and workshops. Further training will be included in the 2016 education programme as well as training specifically for welfare officers.

The training was developed and delivered by UNISON members and ex managers of Against Domestic Violence and Abuse, Devon county council (ADVA). The main focus of the training was the impact of domestic abuse in the workplace and the role of branches particularly stewards, welfare officers and women's officers. Members were encouraged to go back to their branches and consider negotiating a model workplace policy with their employers using UNISON's guidance, "Domestic Violence and Abuse: a trade union issue".

All feedback from the training has been excellent. It enabled members to work together collectively on a shared issue and see the possibility of positive change.

All members who have attended training have had follow up contact regarding their progress on actions. An additional survey is being developed for all members in the region.

There is still much work to be done, and other areas to be addressed such as elder abuse, but the next steps are to use the information from the survey to negotiate good workplace policies and procedures with employers.

***Encouraging women to vote and take part in all levels of democracy –***

The committee produced a flyer for members on 'reasons to vote' and promoted it throughout the region in the months before the general election. The spring edition of women's voice newsletter was an election special.

Members, along with our regional women's officer, met Harriet Harman in Gloucester with the **pink bus**, and gave her a copy of the SW women's manifesto. The document had previously been circulated urging every member to use its lists of demands to challenge all prospective parliamentary candidates and local councillors in the run up to the election.

Regional activists were involved in question time style debates with key parliamentary candidates in Stroud, Exeter, Dorchester and Wiveliscombe. A women's equality 50:50 day held in Exeter was supported by members of the committee.

***Recruitment*** – International Women's Day provided a good opportunity for this.

Members in the University of the West of England held a week long range of events and also training on women's career progression and confidence at work delivered by the regional women's and equalities officer. A week of activities was held across Dorset with stalls highlighting our work and local campaigns

In Torquay local government and health branches organised a street stall.

The women's recruitment packs are used at events throughout the region.

***Female Genital mutilation*** – The committee decided to raise awareness on this issue, (our motion which became part of composite A at national conference) in a number of ways. The Home Office facts leaflet was circulated to the women's email network and members were encouraged to campaign and raise awareness on International Women's Day. Unfortunately the planned workshop at our regional conference was cancelled on the day due to the facilitator's ill-health.

***Mental Health*** – training on this issue, including the particular issues for women was delivered in autumn 2014, January, February and November through the regional education programme. Ensuring it remains a priority concern the committee arranged a "mental health and looking after yourself" workshop at this, and last year's, regional women's conference. The regional development and organising committee agreed to support the progression of our work on developing a toolkit for branches to monitor and track mental health issues, not yet started.

***Communication*** – We continue to find new ways of reaching women members through social media, conferences, training as well as SOG news and women's voice newsletter.

***Progress on other motions passed at this year's NWC*** – this is being undertaken by awareness raising at our regional conference.

Encouraging young women to get involved in the union is always a priority and this year the workshop "Empowering young women and campaigning" is also in response to NWC motion 2.

The regional women's and equalities' officer gave a presentation to the regional council in May on proportionality, fair representation and equality in UNISON. This was partly in response to motion 30, "Proportionality" but also an identified concern about the understanding of the significance of equality, the rules and their importance as a tool for improving branch organisation and their growth.

**Education & Training** – The committee works closely with the regional education and training team to influence the training programme. Women-only courses delivered are:

- Branch women officers' training (April)
- Assertiveness and confidence building (May)
- Return to learn

The SOG networking day in April was attended by some members of the committee.

**Prides, Respects and Tolpuddle festivals** – women have worked with other self-organised groups, Black members, LGBT and disabled members staffing stalls at events, giving out information, talking to current members and recruiting new ones.

### ***Regional Women's Conference, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September, Bristol***

The conference addressed issues that support the NWC (and RWC) workplan in the form of workshops that were held and guest speakers who delivered very powerful speeches:

Finn Mackay, feminist campaigner and activist, who spoke about "Campaigning Against Prostitution and For Prostitution Law Reform – A Trade Union Issue". She talked of child prostitution, and people trafficking and called it the cause, and consequence of inequality in society. It is more lucrative to traffic women for the sex "industry" than it is to traffic arms or ammunition. She asked why our society feels that it is a "human right"

to be allowed to purchase the body of another in this way and that the majority of people who access prostitutes are males in their 30s who are married. Many women in their feedback rated Finn's speech as the highlight of the day.

Joanne Kaye, SW regional secretary, addressed the challenges facing UNISON women both locally, regionally and nationally. She talked about women being hit by the bedroom tax, zero hours contracts, health service funding, domestic violence, working tax credits cuts, public sector pay freezes and the Trade Union Bill. She finished with the rallying cry that women have ended up in the firing line of the conservatives, don't just sit and take the bullets, get out there, protest, and win some changes!

Debi Potter, NEC member, who spoke of her trade union journey from being a non-member, to a non-active member, to a serial UNISON course-goer and to her involvement at a regional and national level within the union. It was an inspiring speech for women as she concluded that she has learned to try things out for herself, not just to take others' word for it and that we should never accept the labels other people stick on you.

Workshops included:

- Empowering young women and campaigning (motion 2)
- Mental health – looking after yourself in the workplace (motion 15)
- Challenging the myths – women and Islam
- Speaking out
- Thrifty ways to survive austere days
- Singing Caribbean style (motion 26) – Jamaican song and story
- Drumming

Every member who attended the conference was given a health pack which included information on endometriosis and adenomyosis (motion 19) and fibroids (motion 17). Feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Well done to all women members in the South West. We are living through really hard times but we prove we can make a real difference when we work together.

## **Cymru/Wales**

The AGM in 2015 saw newly elected members to the regional women's committee bringing new ideas and fresh enthusiasm. The committee also saw a change to its composition due to a number of committee members retiring in February 2016, with additional elections taking place to fill vacant seats.

The group has had a productive year campaigning and organising around women's issues, including the submission of various motions to regional council, supporting local food banks and women's aid groups and supporting the provision of specific training.

In order to support women's groups, the group have continued their toiletries collection for local women's aid groups, which have been gratefully received. Not only do women rely heavily on these services, but also their children who suffer the consequences of domestic violence.

As austerity continues the growing need for food banks will increase. The women's group continue to support local food banks, promote awareness at a local level, and encourage branches to utilise vouchers alongside 'There for You'.

### *Regional council activity*

The women's group have proposed two motions to regional council this year.

1. Following a presentation from a local food bank to the women's group, it was agreed to submit a motion encouraging branches to hold and supply their own supply of food bank vouchers for all staff struggling in the workplace. The motion prompted a

healthy debate and was passed in the region.

2. The group have also been encouraging the promotion of the Smalls4All campaign within branches, and have submitted a motion to branches to raise awareness.

### *Training*

The region has continued their good work with regards training women activists/members. The women's group noted that the *Return to Learn* course that ran in Cardiff & Gwent area was made up of women members. The attendees had given glowing feedback about the course and all demonstrated their enthusiasm to getting other women involved in UNISON.

Training relating to domestic abuse for activists has been arranged to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November).

### *National women's conference*

A number of pre-conference events were held in January to allow for conference training and the day of conference start, to promote a united Welsh delegation and the opportunity to discuss regional viewpoints on the various motions being discussed.

The Welsh delegation remained visible with a number of Welsh delegates taking part in motion debates.

### *Development weekend*

This year, the women's development weekend was held 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> March 2015 in Wrexham (North Wales).

The theme was 'Women making a difference' - giving members the skills and confidence to engage with their union, their community and be more aware/active politically. 16 delegates undertook the training, with excellent feedback on the course content, delivery and objectives.

The group have already discussed the theme for the 2016 development weekend which will look at women's online safety and digital stalking, which ties in with the regional motion to national women's conference 2016 regarding the same topic.

#### *Domestic abuse*

As the regional local government committee was being held in November, to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November), the group put together packs for local government branches to consider campaigning around domestic abuse; including information on the White Ribbon Campaign and Orange Your World (United Nations secretary-general's campaign). These packs have now been distributed across all branches.

The women's group have printed flyers for both campaigns and have purchased orange ribbons marked with the UNISON logo and 'End Violence Against Women' for branches to utilise.

The group have been working with branches to encourage local action and awareness raising. In addition the main UNISON regional offices will also be holding their own 'Orange Your World' events in an effort to raise awareness about this issue.

#### *Back Off Campaign*

The women's group have been promoting the 'Back Off' campaign to create buffer zones around abortion clinics in response to building anti-abortion campaigns. The group have been promoting awareness via the Cymru Wales Facebook page and within branches. They have also been working with the regional information development officer to promote the campaign through media networks.



### **West Midlands**

The regional women's committee has continued to meet throughout 2015. Unfortunately the regional women's leadership day had to be cancelled as it clashed with the anti austerity march organised to coincide with the Tory party conference. The regional women's committee are intending to hold an event to celebrate International Women's Day 2016.

The regional women's committee was successful in securing GPF funding to produce a leaflet to go out to women in marginal constituencies across the West Midlands to encourage them to vote in the general election. The leaflet was sent to all women members in Burton, Redditch and Birmingham Yardley and used at a variety of events and meetings.

### **Yorkshire and Humberside**

The regional women's group have continued to meet throughout 2015 and have worked collectively towards another successful year. The group have continued to contribute towards the regional equality plan, and their own work plan.

The objectives set for 2014 continued into 2015 were encouraging branches to set up SOGs and send members to regional SOGs; developing and providing information for branches on issues affecting women; training for women members in the region; influencing policy making on women's issues; mapping women's equality activity, in addition to promoting the inclusion of women members within UNISON.

Actions taken in support of these objectives were:

- A well received training day on confidence building and influencing UNISON policy
- Promoting and encouraging women's attendance at rallies and demonstrations
- Continued links with 'Life for African Mothers and Babies' and support for the Macmillan coffee morning.

Branches were encouraged to support International Women's Day and where necessary received regional assistance with IWD ribbons and women's health packs. Representatives of the regional women's group attended an event hosted by the Health & Social Care Information Centre Branch.

As in previous years, members of the women's group attended and supported the *Return to Learn* and *Women's Lives* awards ceremony in Leeds, with Melanie Onn - MP

for Great Grimsby - in attendance to present the awards. The event celebrated the fantastic achievements of our women members this year.

Delegates from the women's group have been elected to represent Yorkshire & Humberside women on the relevant committees including regional council, regional committee, TUC and regional service groups.

This year the group have submitted 2 motions to the 2016 women's conference. One highlights the adverse affects of austerity on women, and the second called on UNISON to produce an advisory leaflet on group B streptococcus infection for the women's health pack.

The group has continued to support the 'Lives for African Mothers' charity by collecting baby clothes to be sent to newborns in Africa. In addition the group have also raised money by holding a cake bake for Macmillan cancer support.

The women's group AGM is due to be held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at Commerce House, Leeds.

Thank you to the members both existing and new for their continued dedication and hard work on behalf of the regional women's group and UNISON's equality agenda.

## CONFERENCE REPORTS

### National delegate conference

Brighton : 16-19 June 2015

Delegates: Pat Heron, Eve Rose

The two motions submitted by national women's conference – Modernising our union, which became part of composite A, and Domestic violence - a gendered issue, were both debated and carried.

The motion on domestic violence attracted possibly the largest number of speakers at conference, all speaking in support. This was particularly good news as there had been controversy over the wording and the emphasis of a previous amendment and motion to NDC. The wording which was submitted in 2015 was very carefully considered to ensure that it passed SOC and legal scrutiny, and addressed the concerns raised previously.

To support the motion, the national women's committee organised a fringe meeting, also titled Domestic Violence – a gendered issue, which was attended by approximately 100 delegates, with speakers from My Sister's Friend, the Glasgow Community Safety Partnership and Eileen Dinning, regional equalities officer, Scotland.

Two amendments had been submitted by the women's committee. The first on tackling vulnerable employment and casualisation, was carried. The second on the rights of migrant workers in Qatar was not reached, but the issue is part of the ongoing work of UNISON's international department.

The women's caucus was also well attended, with delegates, as always, keen to share their experiences and to support the motions from the women's committee and conference. For the first time this year, the women's SOG newsheet was emailed to regional women's officers and national committee members

from conference, to keep them updated on the debates. To date the feedback has been positive, and the practice will be continued in 2016.

### Self organised group conferences

#### Black members

Brighton : 6-8 February 2015

Delegates : Sudeep Bone, Anika Hashmi

It was a cause for celebration that more delegates attended 2015 Black members' conference than ever before. 29 motions were passed over the course of the weekend, on the themes of organising and recruiting Black members; challenging racism in the workplace; campaigning; health issues affecting Black people; political education and mobilising Black votes for the general election.

The national women's committee submitted motions on two issues – increasing Black women's participation in UNISON and under-representation of Black women in the workplace.

Guest speakers were Dave Prentis, General Secretary, Lucia McKeever, UNISON president and Seema Malhotra MP, who focused on the forthcoming general election and the powerful influence that mobilising the Black vote could have on the outcome of the election. Councillor Brian Fitch, Mayor of Brighton & Hove, also spoke.

Delegates were able to choose between four workshops – racism in education, organising planning, youth participation/racism in the media and hate crime.



## **Disabled members**

Manchester : 24/26 October

Delegate : Elaine Shelton

The first meeting of conference was, quite rightly, the women's caucus where we were welcomed to conference, introduced to members of the national disabled members' committee and given reassurances that there is no need for anyone to be on their own.

An excellent tribute was given for June Poole, and a special request was made for as many people as possible to attend the social, which was being held in her honour.

### **Workshop on the Trade Union Bill**

The workshop was informative for people who were not sure exactly how damaging this bill could be to trade unions. Conference were advised that if the bill is passed into statute it will come into effect sometime next year in England, Scotland and Wales. At present Northern Ireland is not in scope but this could change as the bill passes through the various stages.

We were left in no doubt that the bill is the most aggressive attack on working people's rights ever to have been known, though certainly not the first attack as we have already seen the Equality Act weakened, and the introduction of employment tribunal fees.

### **Speakers**

Conference was formally opened on the Sunday with a speech from the conference chair who reminded us that Disability Discrimination Act and the Equality Act that followed is 20 years old, and that no longer are disabled people routinely refused work, but they still have to take the lowest paid jobs. No longer are they able to throw us from pubs, clubs and restaurants as they did in the past just because of our disability, but now we are referred to as lazy, as scroungers and as benefit cheats, and disability hate crime is higher than it's ever been. Therefore it is

essential to raise awareness of the importance of the social model of disability to ensure there is recognition for the point we are people with a condition that means we have specific access needs, it is only when these needs are not met that we become disabled.

This very subject was to become a significant point of discussion on a number of motions during conference, where motions referred to people with disabilities, rather than disabled people. For each motion where this occurred, national disabled members' committee had submitted amendments to change it to disabled people, to follow the social model adopted by national delegate conference.

### **Bronwyn McKenna, assistant general secretary**

Unfortunately Dave Pentis had not been able to attend the conference and so Bronwyn addressed us identifying that the most ideological government we have ever had is threatening us, and that disabled members are going to be crucial in the fight to preserve our trade union, employment and civil rights. Despite several independent bodies identifying that the Trade Union Bill is just not fit for purpose the government are intent on railroading it through as quickly as possible.

Already women only earn 80p in the £1.00 when compared to men, and equal pay becomes extremely unlikely when our only tools for negotiation are removed, or restricted to the point of extinction. Yet we are informed that the bank bonuses are back to pre-crisis levels with the predominantly male bank bosses earning 180x the average wage of anyone else. So the fight has to go on becoming ever more focused and determined as our collective voice is heard loud and strong.

**Wendy Nichols, UNISON president**

Following quite an introduction by the conference chair, Wendy addressed the conference discussing further UNISON's determination to "smash the Trade Union Bill", and explaining her exasperation with the government for demonstrating nothing but incompetence with their refusal to regulate the banks, but determination to regulate trade unions. She pointed out that whilst UNISON's clear aim is to defeat the bill they would also use any tactics available to delay, amend or postpone as well.

She went on to advise this government is determined to target the most vulnerable people in society, with their cuts to disability benefits, personal payments, tax credits and cuts to support services, alongside the threat of a significant reduction in the budget for Access to Work on which a significant number of disabled people rely for their reasonable adjustments.

On a positive note the living wage implementation is going well, with the Scottish and Welsh NHS and higher education in England, along with many other individual NHS trusts or local authorities across all nations coming on board. Additionally there has been significant success in our recruitment campaigns with 106,000 new members in the last year.

For continued success working and collaborating across all our self organised groups, is essential. It is only with this level of solidarity that we will help each other to become stronger.

**Debbie Abrahams, MP**

Conference were advised that she and many other Labour MP's are working very hard to firmly oppose both the Welfare Reform and TU Bill at the moment, particularly out in communities campaigning for support. She acknowledged that the welfare reforms would also particularly affect families of disabled children, which is also most likely to

impact on women. Already disabled people are 80% more likely to live in poverty than other people and the new system will discourage disabled people from remaining in work, or from looking for work.

Currently the reforms are subject to a landmark UN enquiry into the potential breach of disabled people's human rights. A confidentiality agreement has been signed so evidence presented is not available for discussion. The outcome of this will be published around spring 2016.

**Motions**

Unusually the motions were taken as they were set out in the conference guide and very early on we had the composite motion A – which introduced many aspects of the importance of reasonable adjustments. This created an interesting, if one-way debate, clearly outlining why reasonable adjustments are essential to maintain disabled people in employment, and the potential threats placed on this by the government ever increasing cuts on services meaning money is very tight and priorities are changing. I had intended to speak to one of the composited motions so I took my place in the speakers for seats, only to be stopped in my tracks when a competent point of order asked the question be put, just as I was the only person left to speak. A new experience for me and helped me understand people's frustration when this happens. A motion on autism in the workplace was another learning point for me due to never having actually worked alongside anyone with autism, or supported a member with the condition. The motion called for the development of a UNISON guide to autism in the workplace and for branches to be encouraged to provide autism awareness training for their reps and officers, which following listening to this motion is certainly something to seriously consider both recommending and supporting.

Many of the motions quite rightly addressed the significant cuts to both benefits and services that support disabled people to maintain meaningful employment, or to just maintain a decent standard of living. With discussions on the threatened cuts to access to work, cuts to housing benefits, increasing the costs to access justice, cuts to disabled students allowance, the move from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independent Payments, threats to begin the taxation of disability benefits, cuts to transport services, threats to remove concessionary travel passes in some regions, and many other similar concerns. Which, when weighed alongside the pending Trade Union Bill and threats to the Human Rights Act, paints quite a bleak picture, which is exactly why it really is time to unite and fight, something this union has not been afraid of doing in the past and needs to dig its heels in now in the face of the austerity and show exactly what we are about.

Conference closed with 6 motions not moved despite a number of requests for the question being put and a reduction in the time to move and speak to motions on the final day. Despite my disappointment about being prevented from speaking to composite A, I did take the rostrum microphone on two occasions. Speaking in support of training and mentoring to be developed to encourage and support disabled women to take office, and in support of a campaign against the decimation of our transport system.

The conference not only produced the interesting debate discussed in this report but also created a plethora of work for the national disabled members committee to co-ordinate, besides various surveys and research to develop evidence of best or good practice to share in many areas, the conference also supported the development of campaigns, lobbies, training, and guidance.

## **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) members**

Brighton : 13-15 November 2015

Delegates : Debbie Hollingsworth, Penny Smith

The conference began Friday afternoon until early Sunday afternoon. Approximately 400 delegates and 60 visitors were in attendance at this year's gathering, the highest to date. Delegates travelled far and wide to take part in this year's conference and all regions were represented. A variety of different sectors present, including health, local government, education, energy, voluntary sector and retired members.

General secretary Dave Prentis was the conference's main speaker and greeted delegates Saturday morning with a motivational speech. Dave Prentis urged delegates to continue the fight against the Trade Union Bill as it now heads to the House of Lords for further debate.

He highlighted a number of the clauses in the proposed legislation. This includes proposed changes to how members pay their subscriptions and restrictions relating to the use of social media use and effective campaigning. Dave Prentis praised the work and efforts made by LGBT members. He pledged that UNISON as a whole would continue to fight for a fairer society, fighting against discrimination and for equality.

MEP Anneliese Dobbs (South East England) attended the conference and addressed delegates with a strong message of solidarity. She stressed the importance of working with fellow MEPs as part of the European Union and encouraged delegates to support the "IN" campaign relating to the up and coming referendum. Dobbs reassured delegates that LGBT workers' rights are being discussed on the European platform and continues to push for equalities home and abroad.

Our final guest speaker was the president of UNISON, Wendy Nichols. Nichols addressed delegates Sunday morning and focused on the way forward for members. Nichols outlined the aims and objectives for UNISON and her vision for the future. Key points made were to engage the workforce, increase our numbers and encourage member recruitment. Also it's vital that our members are engaging and getting active within their local branch. Wendy made it very clear; the current government is making it incredibly difficult for trade unions at the present time. We need to stand together and stand up for human rights and promote union values. Wendy went on to mention her charity work in Africa and supporting education for all. She emphasised the importance of reaching out to those in need and developing new relationships with others across the board.

There were two motions that Debbie and Penny were due to speak on which were 34: Transphobic feminism and 38: LGBT and sex workers organising and the fight against HIV. Both motions were to be opposed. Motion 34 was timetabled as the last motion and right from the start the Scottish region pushed for business to be got through expediently so that this motion could be heard. However as time was so tight on Sunday afternoon the 'question was put' just before Penny was due to speak. Debbie was able to deliver her speech which was very eloquent and very well researched and gave confidence to other delegates to speak in opposition but the motion was passed. Debbie reiterated UNISON's position that the decriminalisation of those that purchase services will not make it safer for those offering the services. Debbie also spoke in support of motion 27: The high risk of homelessness. Again Debbie spoke brilliantly and not only was there plenty of researched fact and figures but her own experiences of finding suitable accommodation in her home town brought an extra dimension and warmth.

## Service group conferences

### Community

Bradford : 27 February -1 March 2015

Delegates : Lesley Discombe, June Poole (dec)

The national women's committee submitted motions on terms and conditions, and pensions.

UNISON General Secretary, Dave Prentis, addressed conference and said we were the only service group whose membership grew last year. He said our members will be hit hardest by a future Tory government as they have promised five more years of austerity if they are re elected in May.

Labour Party MP for Barnsley and Shadow Justice Minister, Dan Jarvis addressed conference and thanked UNISON for its work for "ordinary people", saying when UNISON speaks, it's the voice of 1.3 million people.

Andrew Johnson from West Midlands gave a presentation on organising around commissioning and procurement. He said the reality of commissioning has become the code for cuts but serious campaigning can tackle the problem.

In the pensions debate the speaker from the SGE said the situation facing our members is far worse than it was because many members don't have access to employer pension schemes.

Our speaker from national women's committee, Lesley Discombe, said the voluntary workforce had been hit by the employers attacking terms and conditions. The speaker from the national disabled members committee blasted the situation where working members in the sector were reliant on in-work benefits to get by, and urged the SGE to work with other organisations to put pressure on councils to adopt the living wage.

One speaker who was there with her working dog told conference even though she was working, she still had to rely on a food bank.

In total there were only 8 motions, which included a composite "Pensions in Community and Voluntary Sector". All motions were carried.

## **Higher Education**

Bradford : 28 February 2015

Delegate : Josie Mangan

UNISON assistant general Secretary, Karen Jennings opened the conference. Her speech focused on bargaining, negotiating and equalities.

In the afternoon our guest speaker was Barry Sheerman, Member of Parliament for Huddersfield representing Liam Burn, Shadow Education Minister.

Conference began with the reading of standing orders report number one followed by the HE service group annual report 2015. Noted from the report were the number of motions to UNISON HE conference in 2014 around equality.

## **Motions**

In all there were 21 motions tabled for discussion of which one was withdrawn. On behalf of the NWC I moved motion 13, equal pay in higher education which was well received. Three people spoke in support from the floor. The motion was carried unanimously.

## **Healthcare**

Liverpool : 13-15 April 2015

Delegates : Gail Andrews, Viv Thomson

The NWC submitted two motions, one on achieving a work life balance and one on staff sickness, which was ruled out of order. Two

amendments were also submitted, on redeployment, and the retirement age.

Monday 13 April - After a warm welcome to Liverpool from our President Lucia McKeever, Ros Norman of the SGE spoke about the timing of the conference coinciding with the anniversary of Hillsborough and the long fight for justice. She took the opportunity to reflect on the past year and the opportunities for us moving forward. She also listed some of the many successes we have had including the Doncaster strike against wage cuts and the thousands of people in Ireland who are taking industrial action.

Ros also spoke about Jeremy Hunt not following the lead of the devolved nations in making England a living wage employer. She said that our message going forward must be that we will not stand by and watch the Tories continue to decimate our public services.

Some of the issues going forward will be staffing levels; unsocial hours' payments; and the effect of devolution at all levels (eg Manchester). She cited that statistics show that 91% of ambulance workers believe they are suffering from work related stress. She also reminded us that there are still around £780million worth of cuts to happen and that if the Tories get back in, they will start charging for services eg hearing aids.

The annual report was discussed and approved by conference. There followed a short film about the 2014/15 NHS pay dispute – it was quite inspirational.

The keynote address was given by Dave Prentis, general secretary. He highlighted the fact that the Royal College of Nurses (RCN) could learn much from the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) and welcomed the RCM contribution. He went on to talk about the fact that the NHS in England is not a living wage employer. He alluded to an on-going whistle-blowing case and gave conference support to the member's fight.

Dave went on to talk about how the rich are getting richer following the financial crisis but that there would be no relief for the poor, with an expected £120 billion in cuts expected through cuts to benefits and services for the most vulnerable. He said that the past five years have been hard for everyone, but that should the Tories get back into power, the next five will be even worse. The tax cuts that are being promised will be on the back of a programme of removing 200,000 jobs from public services. We are heading towards the spending levels for public services that we had in the 1930s. We need to stand up for public services and not let them be taken away. He recalled the promises made in 2010 about the NHS being safe in Tory hands – it is now in ruins needing £22 billion pounds of savings to balance the books. He said now was the time to work with Labour to get pledges to make changes, such as ending zero hour contracts, ensuring facility time, ridding us of the Health and Social Care Act and finally addressing the issues in England around the living wage.

We then moved onto business and opened with a motion around influencing the NHS and campaigning. It was passed as were the rest of the motions heard that morning. The afternoon session was more motions all of which were passed without any issue.

Tuesday 14 April - More motions were heard in the morning before the workshops took place. I attended the workshop on the general elections, led by Liz Snape. She spoke about the UNISON strategy of having a unified campaign.

There were 107 seats needed by Labour if they were to win (currently ConDem). She spoke about how the focus was on 60 seats in particular where it was thought a shift could be made. She encouraged us all to get members voting and said that nearer the time more information would be disseminated to encourage members to vote – a survey reported that currently only 65% of members

said they would vote. More worryingly was the fact that 13% of UNISON members said they would vote for UKIP with 48% reporting they would vote Labour and 15% still undecided.

We would be encouraging voting through highlighting issues such as concern around the NHS, immigration, pay and job security. Feedback from the survey indicated that members would be happy to speak with UNISON. She reassured delegates that talking to members is not covered by the Lobbying Act so we were free to speak to them.

Motions continued in the afternoon and some to note are motion 6 around the pay campaign, where it was noted that this would be across all four countries; and motion 8 which touched on members using food banks due to low pay vs rising costs.

Gail Andrews moved Amendment 20.1 for NWC, and was word perfect – the amendment was of course passed.

Emergency Motion 1 on the NHS consultation Ballot was lost. The discussion was around how decisions were made, who should have paid for the ballot, and the letter sent to each branch. It was a good, robust discussion.

Wednesday 15 April - Andy Burnham spoke on Wednesday. He was very good and seemed to genuinely believe in what he was saying about public services and their value. He advised that if Labour get in they would repeal the Health & Social Care Act before the summer. Labour also gave a commitment to break the grasp the private companies have on public service and put a 5% profit cap on. He said that Labour were committed to a 24/7 service, but not on the backs of NHS staff. It would have to be funded. Labour would also protect unsocial hours payments and resist attempts to get regional pay which itself is divisive and allows terms and conditions to be amended.

He said that they valued staff working on social care and recognised that they found the 15 minute visits unworkable, so Labour would end them.

He said that Labour saw the value in having career paths for staff and the need to get more young people into public services. Labour gave a commitment for 20,000 new nurses; 3,000 new midwives; and 5,000 more care workers. There would be fast track apprenticeships for younger people in public services. He said that Labour wanted to give people hope that things can and will be better and that Labour will work with them to make what we have fit their actual needs.

He then did a Q&A. There were a range of issues raised but the one of note was that Labour propose that the NHS will be the single provider of public health services and that the market is coming to an end. They would work with other providers but they would not be the main providers. This would give more security to people. He got rapturous applause throughout his speech and at the end of it too. It was quite heartening and gave a glimmer of hope.

Conference closed with three Motions/amendments outstanding.

Overall it was a full and informative conference. It was just prior to the election and gave some hope that if Labour got in, things could start to improve and there would be a more equal spread of money within society.

## **Energy**

Glasgow : 15 June 2015

Delegate : Debbie Carr

Dave Prentis addressed conference, and was warmly received . The energy sector of UNISON has been critical of feeling like the “poor relation” to local government,

education and health. Dave said that the energy sector was just as important as the other sectors. He thanked us all for our hard work and said that he was very proud of the work we had achieved. Dave, coming from an energy background, understood the issues members were facing and said that he is doing his bit at national level as well.

Doug Parr, a guest speaker from Greenpeace, went through global warming issues. Informing us of the rate of the ice cap melts and the rate in which the world’s temperature is increasing, he told us that even if we stop burning fossil fuel today we need not to do this for 100 years for the temperature to go down by only 2 degrees which won’t help as we are too far into the changes.

There were a few questions put to the speaker from Greenpeace including one from Joy Tennant, EDF Energy North East. She asked if he had a plan to help safeguard people’s jobs through the changes he had proposed to help slow down global warming. He answer was non-committal, which was a disappointment to her.

There were only a few motions, which was disappointing. Only 2 were submitted by the MANWEB branch, the rest were from SOGS. The most interesting one being with regards to having the energy sector brought back under government control, saying that this would prevent offshoring and help our economy. This was not carried.

## **Water, Environment and Transport**

**Glasgow : 14 June 2015**

**Delegate : Fran Hill**

After opening remarks from the service group chair, Ruth Davies and a visit from Dave Prentis, general secretary, we had a guest speaker – Peter Kenway from the New Policy Institute, who has been researching social responsibility in the water industry.

Water bills are still rising faster than inflation – making water companies money making machines. 20% of households have an affordability issue with water bills. Some companies have social tariff schemes - not a comprehensive answer to the unaffordability problem – they nowhere near solve it. Water company profits mean that the water industry can clearly afford to pay the living wage.

The least we should expect:

- affordable water
- the living wage
- tax paid in the UK

I spoke to two motions – Protecting Bus Services and Opposing TTIP. I have spoken at NW committee and conference about the difficulties facing bus passes and the concessionary bus pass.

The NWC motion on TTIP was ruled out of order so I spoke to the motion that the service group had put forward on the subject – highlighting the points in the NWC motion.

Other motions debated were:

- raising the profile of LGBT workplace equality in WE&T
- encouraging diversity in WE&T branches
- the living wage
- voluntary severance schemes
- tackling bi-phobia

The other motions were about industry issues – health and safety matters, tidying up the constitution of WE&T, opposing the breakup of South Yorkshire PTE and an emergency motion on the threat of Transport for Greater Manchester pulling out of national negotiations.

## **Local Government**

Glasgow: 14/15 June 2015

Delegates : Eileen Best, Jo Morgan

The mood of conference was one of fighting back against austerity as well as against the

Tories. Obviously people were disappointed by the election results and there was lots of talk around what had happened and why. Trade unionists also talked about where we go from here with plans already afoot to lobby at the Tory party conference later in the year.

Conference was welcomed by Glen Williams who urged us to stand up, be counted and work together so that we can be stronger against these forces.

Conference was addressed by John Hilary the Executive Director of War on Want who warned us about amongst other things the dangers of TTIP which of course was one of our motions. We also heard from Vincent Ncongwand the General Secretary of the Swaziland TUC.

We spoke on our motions TTIP and low pay and women, as well as our amendments on the workload in schools and privatisation and outsourcing. All of our speeches went well and were well received.

During conference there was a demo at lunchtime on the Sunday for the sacked SECC UNISON rep Robert (Rab) O'Donnell as conference voted to end half an hour early to show support for him. The demo was attended by all delegates and the show of support was very well received.

## **Special Local Government conference**

London: 24 March 2015

Delegate : Eileen Best

A special conference of UNISON's local government group was convened to debate the 2014-16 NJC pay proposals; the decision to cancel strike action on 14 October; the future pay consultation protocols in respect of local government pay claims and the best means to secure a decent pay increase for local government. This is only the second time in UNISON's history that a special conference has been convened. There were around 750 delegates present representing around half a million workers.



There was a packed agenda with 55 motions (5 composites) on the agenda for the one day conference. There was a delay at the start of conference in order to allow delegates time to read the standing orders. There was also a reduction of time to speak from the very start of conference, which made for some very interesting speeches.

There were some close run debates with three card votes. The most anticipated debate was on composite C, A decent pay increase for local government members. The conference voted by almost three to one to submit a pay claim for 2015-16. There was also a decision taken that two lay members will be present at future pay talks with the employers.

During a day of impassioned speeches and strong feelings about the impact of the government's continuing pay freeze and years of declining pay in local government, a range of composites and motions were agreed, which pledged the union to ensure a wide perspective on all pay campaigning; to put women and gender equality at the heart of campaigning; to work jointly with other unions and to build bargaining and industrial strength through a massive recruitment and organising effort.

## Police and Justice

Brighton : 8/10 October 2015

Delegates : Shaaron Coward, Sally Fogell

### Motions

As expected a large number of motions focused on getting UNISON support in fighting the problems being faced by staff in the police and justice service group. This includes:

- Probation colleagues in both NPS and the CRCs
- Trade Union Bill – impact on staff, terms and conditions
- Austerity measures and reduction of police staff
- Volunteers in policing

- Facility time attacks
- Future of Police Staff Council
- Shift allowances
- Diversity
- Stress
- Threats to future of PCSOs (Merseyside and the Met have decided to get rid of their PCSOs).
- Outsourcing of SOCO/CSI in an attempt to save money along with the loss of 1500 police staff posts

The government's next comprehensive spending review due in November was expected to announce cuts of between 25% to 40% of budgets and the introduction of a new police funding formula. The Police Staff Council is under threat with its funding from the government only being guaranteed for another 6 months.

### Guest Speakers

*Dave Prentis*, general secretary, made a promise that he would ensure that all UNISON resources would be available to the police and criminal justice sector to fight the upcoming battles and that we have his total support.

*Chief Constable Alex Marshall – CEO of the College of Policing and Police Staff*, laid out the vision of the College of Policing. He made it clear that the college sees the police family as a whole, so basically the College of Policing is for staff and **not** just officers and wants to ensure that proper standards of professionalism are maintained. The college will develop and provide access to learning materials so that staff can undergo continuous professional development and are working on standardisation of police entry qualifications for staff and officers in the future. The idea behind the code of ethics was to provide a framework to assist in ethical professional decision making and not as a guide to how we should live our lives or for it to be used as a disciplinary tool.

*Alan Charles – Reflection of a Police and Crime Commissioner(Derbyshire Police)* - this is a political role due to the nature of policy making and engagement with the public on how the police service reacts to public demand. In 2016 PCCs are up for re-election and it was urged that staff need to support candidates in the re-election process.

*Zoe Billingham – Reshaping Policing for the Public - HMIC*

Speakers for the Probation Service included Colin Allan, director of Probation NOMS on Transforming Rehabilitation, and Jim Barton-National Probation Service E3 Project – What does it mean for you?

### **Workshops**

Delegates were able to choose from workshops on:

- The Threat to DOCAS: an organising response;
- What future for the Local Government Pension Scheme and its pension funds;
- Preparing for the PCC election;
- UNISON campaign against the Trade Union Bill;
- MIND – Blue Light Programme;
- Reforming the powers of police staff and volunteers.

### **Final Plenary Session**

The session for the police delegates was about the Police Staff Council pay and reward review with regards to:

- The potential impact of the proposals on police staff earnings
- Proposed changes to the PSC handbook
- Consultation issues, process and potential timetable

Since July 2014, the employers and trade unions on the PSC have been discussing potential changes to police staff shift pay and a whole range of other terms and conditions. The session for the probation delegates was

about the future of probation NNC/pay and conditions, with regards to:

- The future of the National Negotiating Council (NNC);
- UNISON pay strategy going forward;
- Negotiating in the CRC's.

### **Bucket Collection**

The official bucket collection was donated to the family of PC Dave Phillips from Merseyside Police, who was killed in the line of duty in October. The total was £430.31.

### **TUC women's conference**

London : 11-13 March 2015

UNISON was represented by delegates from 9 of the twelve regions, the chair of the NWC, the TUC women's committee and women general council members, together with officers of the union

UNISON submitted two motions and one amendment, all of which were carried:

- 15.1 Women in the criminal justice system
- 18 Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)
- 42 Making women's votes count

In view of the importance of the issue the TUC women's committee also issued a supporting statement on TTIP.

In addition UNISON delegates spoke in support of motions on pregnancy discrimination and the impact of Employment Tribunal fees .

### **Elections**

Eleanor Smith (R) was elected to the Black women's seat on the TUC women's committee, and then UNISON's president, Lucia McKeever (L) to a general seat.

### **Fringe meetings**

UNISON co-hosted a TULO fringe on women and the general election, with Gloria Mills national secretary, equalities, speaking on behalf of UNISON.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE 2015/2016**

#### **Regional Representatives**

Eastern	Barbara Staddon, Elisa Vasquez-Walters
East Midlands	Sally Fogell, Penny Smith
Greater London	Amanda Bailey, Josie Mangan
Northern	Susan Gray/ Shirley Scott (job share), Helen Winterburn
Northern Ireland	Ann Brown, Roisin McKinley
North West	Rona Ellison, Karen Narramore, June Poole (deceased)
Scotland	Davena Rankin, Pat Rowland, Viv Thomson
South East	Shaaron Coward, Debbie Hollingsworth
South West	Kym Bayley, Jo Morgan
Cymru / Wales	Jane Gebbie, Mary Halligan
West Midlands	Jennifer Forbes, Sarah Feeney/Paulette Whyte (job share)
Yorkshire & Humberside	Gail Andrews, Elaine Shelton, Pam Sian

#### **Others**

National Black Members' Committee	Ishrt Raouf, Pam Singh
National Disabled Members' Committee	Elizabeth Cameron, Maggie Griffin
National LGBT Committee	Eileen Best, Darienne Flemington
Young Members Forum	Melanie Pearson (pre July) Sophia Dixon (post July)
NEC	Lesley Discombe, Helen Jenner (pre June), Tomasa Bullen, Lynn Poulton (post June) Margaret McKee
TUC co-optees	Lucia McKeever, Eleanor Smith

#### **Staff**

<b>National Women's Officer</b>	Sharon Greene
<b>Assistant National Officer</b>	Clare Knights

## APPENDIX 2

### Constitution of the national women's committee

#### Representation

Regions with up to 100,000 women members	Two seats
Regions with more than 100,000 women members	Three seats
Other self-organised groups (SOGs)	Two for each national committee
National young members forum (NYMF)	One seat
National executive council	Three seats

All posts are open to job share.

Each region and self-organised group may nominate a substitute.

When electing representatives, regions are reminded of the requirement to achieve fair representation for the low paid, part time workers, shift workers, Black women, disabled women, lesbians, bisexual and transgender women. Where regions are entitled to three representatives, the third seat must take into account fair representation.

**Term of office:** The committee is elected every two years, taking office after national women's conference.

**Length of service:** Regional, SOG and NYMF representatives shall serve no more than two consecutive terms on the committee. This is to encourage and enable more women to become involved in UNISON activities at a national level.

Once a regional, SOG or NYMF representative has served on the national women's committee, they must take a break of at least one two-year term before they are eligible for re-election either as a full member or substitute to the national women's committee.

**Quorum:** The quorum for meetings of the committee will be no less than one third of the members, excluding the chair.

**Meetings:** The committee will meet no less than four times annually. Further meetings will be held on the recommendation of the committee.

**AGM:** The annual general meeting of the committee will be the first meeting after national women's conference.

**Chair and vice-chairs:** The chair and two vice-chairs shall be elected by the committee at the AGM.

**Voting:** Voting will be by show of hands. A ballot can be held on more sensitive issues, with the consent of the majority of the committee. In the event of a tied vote, the chair will have the casting vote.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the previous meeting will be circulated at least 14 days prior to the meeting. These will be scrutinised for accuracy and, if accepted, signed as a true record.

## APPENDIX 3

### Attendance at meetings of the national women's committee

Meetings were held in March, September and November

Nominating Body	Name	Possible	Actual
Eastern	Barbara Staddon	3	2
Eastern	Elisa Vasquez-Walters	3	3
East Midlands	Sally Fogell	3	2
East Midlands	Penny Smith	3	3
Greater London	Amanda Bailey	3	2
Greater London	Josie Mangan	3	2
Northern	Susan Gray (job share)	3	0
Northern	Shirley Scott (job share)	3	1
Northern	Helen Winterburn	3	0
Northern (sub)	Pat Heron	2	1
Northern Ireland	Ann Brown	3	3
Northern Ireland	Roisin McKinley	3	3
North West	Rona Ellison	3	2
North West	Karen Narramore	3	1
North West	June Poole (deceased)	1	1
Scotland	Davena Rankin	3	3
Scotland	Pat Rowland	3	2
Scotland	Viv Thomson	3	2
South East	Shaaron Coward	3	2
South East	Debbie Hollingsworth	3	2
South West	Kym Bayley	3	3
South West	Jo Morgan	3	3
Cymru / Wales	Jane Gebbie	3	3
Cymru / Wales	Mary Halligan	3	1
West Midlands	Jennifer Forbes	3	3
West Midlands	Sarah Feeney (job share)	3	0
West Midlands	Paulette Whyte (job share)	3	3
Yorkshire & Humberside	Gail Andrews	3	3
Yorkshire & Humberside	Elaine Shelton	3	3
Yorkshire & Humbersdie	Pam Sian	3	3
NBMC	Ishrt Raouf	2	1
NBMC	Pam Singh	3	2
NBMC (sub)	Roshni Singh	1	1
NDMC	Elizabeth Cameron	3	2
NDMC	Maggie Griffin	3	3
LGBT	Eileen Best	3	2
LGBT	Darienne Flemington	3	3
Young Members Forum	Melanie Pearson	1	0
Young Members Forum	Sophia Dixon	2	2
NEC	Tomasa Bullen	2	1

NEC	Margaret McKee	3	2
NEC	Lynn Poulton	2	2
NEC	Lesley Discombe	1	1
NEC	Helen Jenner	1	1
TUC	Lucia McKeever	3	2
TUC	Eleanor Smith	3	2

## APPENDIX 4

### Glossary

D&O	NEC's development and organisation committee
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
FRMC	Finance & resource management committee (UNISON)
LAOS	Learning and organising services (UNISON department responsible for member training)
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LLL	Lifelong learning
MPU	Membership participation unit (UNISON department with equalities remit)
NBMC	National Black members' committee
NDC	National delegate conference
NDMC	National disabled members' committee
NEC	National executive council
NEC ELC	National executive council equality liaison committee
NWC	National women's committee
NWO	National women's officer
NYMF	National young members' forum
PDCC	NEC's policy development and campaigns committee
RWC	Regional women's committee
RWO	Regional women's officer
SOG	Self organised group
TUC	Trades Union Congress

### Commonly used terms

Self organisation	Groups facing discrimination meeting and organising to determine their collective agenda and feeding it into UNISON's structure.
SOGs	The four self-organised groups: defined by UNISON national rules as women members, Black members, disabled members and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members.
Positive action	Action to combat the prejudice and discrimination experienced by members of the self-organised groups.
Self-definition	Right of people to define themselves, e.g. as disabled or lesbian.
Proportionality	The representation of women and men in fair proportion to the relevant number of female and male members of the electorate – UNISON has a rulebook commitment to proportionality.
Fair representation	The broad balance of representation of members of the electorate, taking into account such factors as age and low pay, the balance between full-time and part-time time workers, manual and non-manual workers, different occupations, skills, race, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity – UNISON has a rulebook commitment to fair representation.

## UNISON Organisation

National delegate conference	Supreme decision-making body of UNISON – annual conference of branch delegates at which the self-organised groups have representation.
NEC	National Executive Council – elected body of lay members.
Lay member	A member who is not an employee of the union.
Lay structure	A body that does not consist of employees of the union.
Regions	UNISON is organised into 12 regions around the country, each with their own regional office and staff.
Service groups	<p>UNISON organises members in the following services – energy, health care, higher education, local government, police staff, transport, community and water and environment.</p> <p>The service group has autonomy to decide the group’s general policy and negotiate on behalf of their members. Each service group has an annual conference of delegates which sets the group’s agenda for the following year.</p>
Sector	A sub-group of a service group, e.g. the nursing and midwives sector of the healthcare service group.
Code of good branch practice	A set of guidelines, including a chapter on self-organisation, drawn up by the NEC which it considers desirable for branches to follow.
UNISON InFocus	Monthly magazine for stewards and activists
UNISON efocus	Weekly email to stewards and activists
U magazine	Quarterly magazine for all members
Labour link levy	A fund made up of contributions from opted-in members used to support the Labour Party.
GPF	General political fund: A fund made up of contributions from opted-in members used for non party-political campaigning.



## APPENDIX 5

### ANALYSIS OF PROPORTIONALITY AND FAIR REPRESENTATION : NW CONFERENCE 2015

		%
<b>Have you attended this conference before?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Would you describe yourself as a disabled person?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>How would you describe your ethnic origin?</b>		
Asian UK		0
Asian Other		0
Bangladeshi		1
Indian		1
Pakistani		1
Black African		1
Black Caribbean		2
Black UK		2
Black other		0.5
Black mixed heritage		1
Chinese		0
Irish		3
White UK		79
White other		5
<b>Would you describe yourself as:</b>		
Lesbian		6
Gay		0.5
Bisexual		6
<b>Would you describe yourself as:</b>		
Transgender		1
<b>What is your age group?</b>		
16 to 26		2
27 to 39		10
40 to 49		26
50 plus		46
<b>What subscription band are you in?</b>		
A Up to 2,000		2
B 2,001 - 5,000		1
C 5,001 - 8,000		2
D 8,001 - 11,000		3
E 11,001 - 14,000		6
F 14,001 - 17,000		10
G 17,001 - 20,000		17
H 20,001 - 25,000		20
I 25,001 - 30,000		16
J 30,001 - 35,000		10
K over 35,000		6
Member in education/apprenticeship		0
<b>How many hours per week do you work?</b>		
35 or more		64
30-34		11
16-29		13
Less than 16		5





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